ABSTRACT
THE ROLE OF COUNSELOR IN A LINKED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
By
By Roberta Clarke
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High school counselors today have many roles. Through these roles, counselors strengthen student experience. Most of the scholarly literature concerning counselors’ roles overlooks the voice of high school counselors serving in a Linked Learning environment. As a result, counselors’ voices are missing in conversations about their roles in a Linked Learning environment. Linked Learning is a high school reform initiative that seeks to successfully prepare students for postsecondary education and careers by engaging students in linking strong academics with demanding technical learning, and thereby strengthening their real-world experience in a wide range of fields.

The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to investigate high school counselors’ perceptions of their roles in a Linked Learning environment. This study contributes to a small body of literature regarding counselors and Linked Learning environments. A conceptual framework was developed utilizing components of the American School Counselors Association themes and delivery systems, as well as the Transforming School Counseling Initiative skills, and community counseling theory to serve as a valuable lens to view the research. This interview study found that counselors in a Linked Learning environment hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for
all students by serving as advocates, utilizing school guidance curriculum, and providing
direct school services. Secondly, counselors work with their Pathway community to
identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support by serving as
collaborators, providing responsive services, and indirect student services. Thirdly,
counselors get to know their student’s needs, and are familiar with the unique
characteristics of their Pathway program by serving as systems change agents, providing
system support, and indirect school services. Lastly, counselors guide decisions about
postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits by serving in the role of leader,
guiding students through individual student planning, and providing direct student
services. Implications of the study and recommendations for policy and practice are
offered within the discussion.
THE ROLE OF COUNSELOR IN A LINKED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Confusion regarding the appropriate role(s) of professional school counselors can be attributed to a general lack of understanding about what counselors can do to help students (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). Researchers also indicate that counselors’ roles are as diverse as the students they serve. They are “seen as a profession in search of an identity” (Schimmel, 2008, p. 1). As Dr. Trish Hatch, director of the school counseling program at San Diego State University pointed out, “The school counseling profession historically has lacked clarity of role and function, and school counselors have not always met the needs of all students for a variety of reasons” (T. Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008, p. 34).

A professional school counselor is a member of the school system’s counseling and guidance staff that provides a comprehensive counseling and guidance program for students, consults and collaborates, and provides support to other educational programs. There is a wide range of roles that counselors play such as leaders, advocates, collaborators, and systems change agents. They provide crucial services to students and other stakeholders in an era when high school graduation rates are under scrutiny. Through these roles, counselors strengthen the student experience. Yet, role ambiguity persists in what services counselors are expected to provide.
In a typical high school, numerous job functions can fall to counselors. Because political and economic conditions often influence the direction and development of student services, the challenges and demands on the school counselors can vary. (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2005, p. 6). This can result in role ambiguity, lack of voice, and poor alignment with the ASCA’s National Standards.

Despite this challenging discourse, scholars suggest that counselors are uniquely positioned to make a big difference in schools. The authors summed up their findings with an assertion that even though there are nearly as many school counselors as administrators in the United States, counselors have been largely left out of the education reform agenda (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011).

Linked Learning is a high school reform initiative that seeks to successfully prepare California students for postsecondary education and careers by engaging students in linking strong academics with demanding technical learning and thereby strengthening their real-world experience in a wide range of fields. (ConnectEd: The California Center for College and Career [ConnectEd], 2008) As high schools begin implementing Linked Learning as delineated in AB 790 (Career Technical Education: Linked Learning Pilot Program, 2011), it will be important that the role of counselor be articulated to enhance student support in realizing the promise of Linked Learning.

According to Saunders, Hamilton, Fanelli, Moya, and Cain (2013), there are four essentials of Linked Learning. The first is an academic core that consists of A-G course requirements. The second is a technical/professional core which is a practical use of academic learning. The third is real world learning opportunities such as work based experience, and the last is comprised of support services that may include counseling.
The quality criteria for Linked Learning (ConnectEd, 2008) includes and summarizes the necessity for professional school counselors to be active participants in order for Linked Learning principles to be fully realized. Counselors are called upon to develop and sustain personalized relationships with all students, and foster strong connections between students and their peers. Counselors are members of a pathway team that are to quickly identify and address students’ academic, personal, and social support needs. In addition, the counselor, acting as a member of the pathway community, utilizes timely interventions to ensure that all students achieve the learning outcomes. Proactive interventions are utilized to meet the student’s individual needs. Counselors are to assist the students in choosing their pathway, and support them in the completion of the program by guiding them through a multi-year college and career plan that extends through high school. These indicators contribute to the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment, but how this policy plays out in practice is a topic that had not previously been researched. Therefore, in this study, the researcher explored the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment. Due to the relatively new Linked Learning reform initiative, it is not surprising that minimal attention has been given to defining the role of the high school counselor in a Linked Learning environment, and to investigate if policy and practice align with policy implementation.

Problem Statement

Linked Learning serves all Long Beach Unified high school students who are enrolled in Small Learning Communities at the district’s high schools. Linked Learning is taking priority in the Long Beach Unified School District as high schools continue to strive for pathway certification. The district’s time, talent, and treasure are being
invested in the planning, developing, and implementing this program. The goal is that all Long Beach Unified High Schools will eventually become wall-to-wall Linked Learning certified. (LBUSD, 2013).

Therefore, it is important to examine the role of the counselor in a Linked Learning environment, as it remains nebulous. As a result, the voices of counselors are missing in the dialogue about the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment. For Linked Learning to move forward, counselors need to have a voice regarding the planning, implementing, and evaluating stages of this education reform initiative. In this dissertation study, the researcher sought to explore the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment by giving counselors their voice.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to explore the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment. The researcher’s aim was to invite more critical reflection by counselors as they discussed and examined their perceptions of their role as counselor in the context of Linked Learning. The findings of this study can help professional school counselors and educators better understand their roles in a Linked Learning environment.

Twelve counselors from two high schools in the Long Beach Unified School District were interviewed regarding their roles in a Linked Learning environment. Millikan and Cabrillo High Schools were chosen due to both being in the process of certification, or have already been Linked Learning certified in at least one pathway program. These two schools exhibit high-functioning pathways, and are located within 30 minutes of each other by surface streets.
Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions that are drawn from the Linked Learning standards:

1. How do counselors hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all students?

2. How do high school counselors work with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support?

3. To what extent do counselors know pathway students and are they familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway program?

4. How do counselors guide decisions about postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits?

Conceptual Framework

The School Based Community Counseling Conceptual Framework (SBCCCF) will be utilized as a guide to analyze the roles, service delivery models, and skills that counselors exemplify as they provide direct and indirect services to students and schools. The title is based on the community counseling theory as it is integrated into the ASCA’S themes and delivery systems, as well as the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) skills. This relationship creates a conceptual framework that incorporates school based counseling and infuses it into the community counseling theory tenets. The researcher chose to integrate the arenas of school based and community counseling due to the fact that the outdated model of “come and see” is being replaced by the “go and tell” model as schools (and counselors) strive to incorporate the community as a whole into their educational system.
For this study, community counseling theory will be utilized as a part of a conceptual framework from which to investigate how high school counselors view their roles in a Linked Learning environment. This study will investigate how multiple roles are impacted by numerous responsibilities, expectations, and demands counselors encounter on a frequent basis. In addition, the ASCA themes and delivery systems will be incorporated. The Education Trust TSCI skills will also be included in the SBCCCF.

The community counseling theory was developed by Lewis, Lewis, Daniels, and D’Andrea (2003). Community counseling theory is a comprehensive framework of intervention strategies and services that assist in the personal development and overall well-being of communities and individuals. This theoretical framework entails four major service domains. The four service domains that make up the community counseling model include Direct Client/Student, Direct Community/School, Indirect Client/Student, and Indirect Community/School Services.

For ease of reading, the researcher will refer to the term “client” as “student” and “community” as “school” as this is more common vernacular used in the educational setting. Hence “Direct Community Service” will be referred to as “Direct School Service.” “Direct Client Services” will be referred to as “Direct Student Services.” “Indirect Community Services” will be referred to as “Indirect School Services.” “Indirect Client Services” will be referred to as “Indirect Student Services.”

Direct Student Services include individual, small group, and family counseling services that are provided to individuals experiencing distress. Direct School Services refer to those preventative interventions that involve students who are known to be high risk for future psychological, emotional, or academic problems but have not yet
manifested personal or school-related difficulties. Indirect Student Services refers to the work counselors do with other stakeholders who are interested in fostering the healthy development and empowerment of students in disenfranchised groups. Indirect School Services refers to the services aimed at realizing more comprehensive and lasting systemic changes in the schools and communities where students are situated (Lewis et al., 2003).

Community counseling theory presents a vision that emphasizes a new paradigm for counselors to help them think and act in new ways to meet the psychological needs of large numbers of diverse people. An emphasis is placed on effective, respectful, and ethical counseling practices (Lewis, 2003). According to the authors, and building on the work of Senge (1994), there are three main reasons for this new theory. The first reason is for counselors to gain a clear direction and purpose. “Second, by developing a new vision of their professional roles, counselors can better meet the needs of clients living in a rapidly changing, culturally diverse, technological society” (Lewis et al., 2003, p. 2). Thirdly, expanding on Herr and McFadden (1991) and Locke, Meyers, Herr (2001), this theory helps counselors address the urgent need to move forward from an outdated vision of counseling into a more comprehensive vision of their role to help them to remain relevant and a viable part of the educational system in the 21st century. Lastly, a new vision of counseling is needed to address the inherent limitations of the traditional counseling paradigm, thus fueling the need for a new paradigm. (Lewis et al., 2003).

The role of the Community Counselor extends beyond the traditional roles and education of the past. The community counseling framework is a supplement, not to be viewed as a replacement of the traditional ideas of school counseling. The Community
Counselor pays close attention to the individual and the environment in which he/she is in to promote effective change. Community counseling theory can be applied in any human service setting, including an emphasis on educational settings such as secondary schools, (Lewis et al., 2003).

The four ASCA themes of Advocacy, Collaboration/Coordination/Referral, Systemic Change, and Leadership will be used to explore the roles that professional school counselors play in a Linked Learning environment. The first theme is that of Advocacy. ASCA asserts that, “School counselors advocate for students’ educational needs and work to ensure these needs are addressed at every level of the school experience” (ASCA, 2005, p. 24).

Secondly, the theme of Collaboration/Coordination/Referrals needs to be considered. “School counselors work with all stakeholders, both inside and outside the school system to develop and implement responsive educational programs that support the achievement of the identified goals for every student” (ASCA, 2005, p. 25).

Thirdly, the theme of Systemic Change is included. “With a school-wide expectation to serve the needs of every student, school counselors are uniquely positioned to assess the school for systemic barriers to academic success” (ASCA, 2005, p. 25).

Lastly, the theme of Leadership is crucial. “School counselors serve as leaders who are engaged in system-wide change to ensure student success. They help every student gain access to rigorous academic preparation that will lead to greater opportunity and increased academic achievement” (ASCA, 2005, p. 25).
ASCA utilizes four delivery systems in their model to implement a Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP): Guidance Curriculum, Individual Student Planning, Responsive Services, and Systems Support.

The Guidance Curriculum involves structured lessons designed to help students achieve competencies. It is provided systematically in classrooms and small groups. The purpose is to provide all students with the knowledge and skills appropriate for their age. It was shown that, “School counselors systematically identify and blend specific core academic standards with school counseling standards in a culturally competent manner to create integrated lessons that assist students across curricula” (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2011, p. 224). The authors go on to advise, “To gain the awareness and knowledge necessary to implement lessons likely to resonate with students’ values, beliefs, and experiences, school counselors are encouraged to be active in the school’s communities” (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2011, p. 228).

Individual Student Planning consists of counselors coordinating ongoing activities to help students develop personal goals and future planning. Responsive services involve responding to the students’ immediate needs. The student may require counseling, consultation, or referral. The team works together to provide interventions for the student. Additionally, “the system support component enables the school counseling process to be effective through leadership and advocacy, consultation, collaboration and teaming, program management, and professional development” (ASCA, 2005 p. 131). This aspect also provides support to other programs in the school.

In the early 1990s, The Education Trust and The DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund set out to develop a national agenda to improve school counseling. A nation-wide,
14 month study was completed, and it was found that there was little relationship between how professional school counselors were trained, and the actual services they provide. Specifically, there was a lack of training in leadership, advocacy, and collaboration skills. This disconnect led to the TSCI to train school counselor graduate students and practicing counselors alike to address issues of equity and access, and promote systemic change in public schools. (Education Trust [EdTrust], 2009) This initiative was instrumental in creating the ASCA’s national standards.

In June of 2003, The Education Trust and MetLife Foundation created the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC) to ensure that counselors play a leadership role in advancing the equity agenda (EdTrust, 2009). They created a New Vision for School Counseling that includes a scope of work that highlights five skills: Leadership, Advocacy, Teaming and Collaboration, Counseling and Coordination, and Assessment and Use of Data. For the purpose of the study, the skill of Assessment and Use of Data will not be utilized in the conceptual framework due to its underlying infusion throughout the framework. Assessment and use of data is interwoven into the other areas of the scope that are included.

The skills incorporated in the New Vision for School Counselors: Scope of Work includes:

Advocacy--One way this is demonstrated is when counselors “advocate for students’ placement and school support for rigorous preparation for all students” (NCTSC, 2009, p. 1).
Teaming and Collaboration--An example of this is demonstrated when counselors “collaborate with other helping agents (peer helpers, teachers, principals, community agencies, businesses)” (NCTSC, 2009, p.1).

Counseling and Coordination--This is demonstrated when counselors “act as a liaison between students and staff, setting high aspirations for all students and developing plans/supports for achieving these aspirations” (NCTSC, 2009, p. 1).

Leadership--One way of exemplifying this is when counselors “promote, plan, and implement prevention programs, career and college readiness activities, social and personal management activities; and decision-making activities.” (NCTSC, 2009, p. 1).

Counselors fulfill various roles on a high school campus. ASCA has defined a counselor’s role. The researcher utilized community counseling theory, the ASCA national model elements of themes and service delivery models, and EdTrust’s TSCI skills, and applied this framework as a lens to this study.

Community counseling theory supports school counselors implementing four facets in the educational setting to foster student learning and development. The first facet is that of Direct School Services. These services refer to preventative interventions for students who have not manifested personal or educational difficulties. The ASCA supports this ideal by encouraging professional school counselors to advocate for students and their programs. Professional school counselors are to support those programs and policies that help students academically, as well as with college, and personal/social needs. This includes but is not limited to preventative interventions that are addressed in the first facet of the community counseling theory. The ASCA component of delivery systems references the school guidance curriculum. This is the
guidance curriculum that enables professional school counselors to provide or deliver lessons to assist students academically, with college/career, and with personal/social issues on a widespread basis. They are structured, developmentally appropriate lessons that are either delivered directly by the counselor in the classroom, or provided to a teacher or other staff member to be implemented on a larger scale. The National Center for Transforming School Counseling Initiative (NCTSCI) includes advocacy as a skill set that counselors need to possess to ensure that all students have proper placement and support in the educational setting. The ASCA and the NCTSC both list advocacy as a recommended area of practice. This supports the emphasis placed on advocate as an important role that counselors play. The NCTSCI emphasizes equity and access and closing the achievement gap, where ASCA emphasizes advocacy for all students.

By providing Direct School Services in the form of preventative interventions for all students via the school guidance curriculum, professional school counselors advocate for students and their programs by supporting them with their academic, college/career and personal/social needs. This ensures that students are properly placed in rigorous coursework as all students learn to take ownership of their educational journeys. This in turn helps professional school counselors hold high expectations and support for all students on their caseload.

The second facet of the community counseling theory is that of Indirect Student Services. These services refer to the work professional school counselors do with other stakeholders. The ASCA supports this ideal by encouraging professional school counselors to collaborate and consult with other individuals or organizations. The ASCA component of delivery systems references responsive services. These services are
designed, to “meet the needs of students’, parents’ and teachers’, and their immediate need for referral or consultation” (ASCA, 2005, p. 131). Although ASCA currently lists responsive services as a direct service (when counseling students in crisis, and other situations; p. 84), for the purpose of this study, responsive services will be considered as indirect services due to the aspect of working with stakeholders to address the student’s needs by providing consultation, collaboration and referrals. The NCTSCI includes teaming and collaboration as a skill set as a part of its scope of the work. Supporting the emphasis placed on collaborator as an important role that counselors play. Collaboration may occur with outside agencies such as therapists and social workers, or with teachers, administrators, business partners, et cetera.

By providing Indirect Student Services in the form of teaming and collaborating with stakeholders, counselors can be responsive to the needs of students, parents, and teachers alike. This in turn helps professional school counselors to collaborate with stakeholders to provide interventions for students who are in need of additional support.

The third facet of the community counseling theory is that of Indirect School Services. These services refer to the work professional school counselors do to effect lasting systemic change. The ASCA supports this ideal by encouraging professional school counselors to act as systems change agents. The ASCA component of delivery systems references systems support, which is the professional school counselor planning, developing, implementing and assessing the Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP). The NCTSCI includes counseling and coordination as a skill set as a part of their scope of the work. The TSCI encourages counselors to be a liaison between students and staff, and develop plans for achieving the goals.
By providing Indirect School Services in the form of acting as a systems change agent, supporting the system, and counseling and coordinating, the professional school counselor becomes familiar with the systems in place, and the students in the programs they serve.

The fourth facet of the community counseling theory is that of Direct Student Services. These services refer to the work professional school counselors do with individuals and small groups. The ASCA supports this ideal by encouraging professional school counselors to act as leaders. The ASCA (2012) component of individual student planning consists of “activities designed to help students establish personal goals and develop future plans such as individual learning and graduation plans (p. 85). The NCTSC includes leadership as a skill set included in their scope of the work. The TSCI encourages professional school counselors to promote, plan, develop, and implement activities that align with a CSCP. Both ASCA and TSCI emphasize leadership as a necessary quality for a professional school counselor to possess, emphasizing the professional school counselor in the role of Leader.

By providing Direct Student Services in the form of acting as a leader of the CSCP, the professional school counselor will assist students on an individual basis to help lead them into decisions about post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits.

The SBCCCF was designed for purposes of this study to provide both a theoretical and practical lens to capture the complexities of expectations placed on the professional school counselor. The SBCCCF is standards based, informed by community counseling theory, and applied over the Linked Learning certification quality criteria. In
total, the framework provided an effective lens for appropriate analysis of data derived from study participants and informed context for recommendations for policy, practice, and further research.

**Operational Definitions**

Small learning communities: A small learning community (SLC) is also referred to as a school-within-a-school. It is a form of school structure that is increasingly common in high schools to subdivide large school populations into smaller groups of students and teachers. The primary purpose is to create more personalized learning environments to better meet the needs of students. Teachers typically have common planning time to allow them to develop interdisciplinary projects and keep up with the progress of their shared students. It should be noted that in the Long Beach Unified School District, all SLCs are pathways.

Linked Learning:

Linked Learning transforms students’ high school experience by bringing together strong academics, demanding technical education and real-world experience to help students gain an advantage in high school, postsecondary education, and careers. In the Linked Learning approach, students follow industry-themed pathways in a wide range of fields, such as engineering, arts, media, biomedicine, and health. These pathways connect learning with students’ interests and career aspiration, leading to high graduation rates, increased postsecondary enrollments, higher earning potential, and greater civic engagement. Used in schools throughout California, this integrated approach helps students build a strong foundation for success in college and career, and life. (Connect Ed, Team, 2011)

ConnectEd: “ConnectEd partners with communities to transform education systematically through Linked Learning, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, graduate ready for college, career, and life” (Connect Ed, Team, 2011, p. 1).

American School Counselor Association: “The ASCA supports school counselors’ efforts to help students focus on academic, personal/social and career
development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society” (ASCA, 2012, p. ii).

Pathway:

Pathways are programs of academic and technical study that integrate classroom and real-world learning set in the context of one of California’s major industries. Students pursue a pathway over multiple years and graduate prepared for the full range of post-graduation options—which can include two-or-four-year college, certification programs, apprenticeships, formal job training, or military service.” (ConnectEd, 2008, p. 5)

It should be noted that all pathways in the Long Beach Unified School District are also in the form of SLCs.

Pathway communities: Pathway communities may include administrators, lead teachers, counselors, career-technical education teachers, academic teachers; work based learning coordinators, parents, staff members, and/or additional stakeholders such as business partners, post-secondary and community partners, and students. This team works collaboratively to support the pathway program (ConnectEd, 2008).

National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC): The NCTSC promotes a vision of school counseling in which school counselors advocate for equity and access to rigorous college and career-readiness curriculum, and academic success for all students. It is the creator of the TSCI. (NCTSC, 2009)

Linked Learning, Pathways, and SLCs: An SLC is a team of teachers that work together with a common core of students to build meaningful relationships and ensure that all students are successful. An SLC acts as a small school, or school with-in a school. It may not be themed such as a ninth grade academy or alpha academy (all students with last names in A-L in one community or house with students with the last
names starting with M-Z in another house or community. In the Long Beach Unified School District, all students are enrolled in an SLC.

Additionally in the Long Beach Unified School District, all SLCs are Linked Learning pathways in various stages of certification. This means that they will include a 4 year sequence of career technical courses that link content across the curriculum and include career-based learning activities. Pathways connect learning in the classroom to real-world applications. Linked Learning pathways are industry themed in the context of one of California’s major industries. These pathways are in a wide range of fields such as engineering, arts, media, biomedicine, and health. Linked Learning enhances a pathway by allowing students to take a sequence of career technical courses that link the context across the curriculum. Students have the opportunity to experience career-based learning activities. The pathway course work meets college entrance requirements. Pathways are open to all students with no prerequisites required. Pathways provide a system of support to ensure student success.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations of the Study

There are several assumptions, limitations, and delimitations to this study.

Assumptions

The first assumption is that the qualitative methodology utilized will evoke thick, rich, descriptive narratives from counselors that are being honest about their experiences. It is also assumed that this method will provide critical data that will add depth to knowledge about these experiences to inform practice and policy. Additionally, it is assumed that all participants will be honest in their responses. Also, it is taken for granted that all participants will have a working knowledge of Linked Learning.
Delimitations

A delimitation of this study is that this study does not seek to document outcomes and successes of counselors or the overall effectiveness of Linked Learning, only the implementation of it.

Limitations

A limitation of this qualitative study is that it is limited by the relatively small sample size of 12 participants who are all counselors at two high schools in the Long Beach Unified School District. While it is likely that information gathered can be transferred to other areas, this research cannot be generalized beyond its scope.

Lastly, my own personal bias as a high school counselor at one of the sites could also affect the outcome of this research. This study is based on the researcher’s experience as a high school counselor working in a Linked Learning environment at one of the two schools of study. Therefore, the proposed research is influenced by the researcher’s work in a Linked Learning environment. This may be limiting to the study because the researcher has personal biases and personal experience in working as a high school counselor in a Linked Learning environment.

Significance of the Study

It is predicted that the topic of the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment is significant due to the expanding role of a counselor in building Linked Learning capacity on an educational campus. The role of the counselor strengthens student experience which is a perfect fit for Linked Learning. Counselors are the gatekeepers for equity and access.
Since 2006, The James Irvine Foundation has invested financial resources into Linked Learning. In 2009, the foundation launched the California Linked Learning District Initiative to support the implementation of Linked Learning in nine California school districts including the Long Beach Unified School District.

This topic of the high school counselor’s role in a Linked Learning environment breaks new ground in a focused, specific manner in that the James Irvine Foundation project, Expanding Preparation of California’s New Teachers and for Linked Learning: Models of Clinical Teacher Preparation and Induction has been awarded to California State University, Long Beach. One purpose of this research and evaluation is to prepare future leaders for the region’s schools in Linked Learning. In concert with the goals of the grant are the voices of high school counselors as they pertain to counselors’ roles in a Linked Learning environment.

In turn, this research will assist counselors in bridging the gap in their knowledge, skills, and attitudes relative to building their counseling capacity within Linked Learning. This will also assist counselor preparation programs in better preparing their students to work as counselors in Linked Learning environments.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment. The role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment has yet to be defined. With high schools moving toward Linked Learning, and to realize promise, articulating the role of counselor makes sense. Therefore, there is a need to understand the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment.
Minimal attention has been given to defining the role of the high school counselor in a Linked Learning environment. Counselors are in search of an identity when it comes to Linked Learning. There is a need to focus on high school counselors’ insights regarding the role of counselor in Linked Learning. Their role continues to be nebulous. As a result their voices are missing in the dialogue about the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment. To give breath to their voice, this study will be analyzed through the SBCCCF.

In Chapter 2, the researcher will review the literature in terms of counselors’ roles and the ASCA standards. In Chapter 3, the methodology will be described in detail. In Chapter 4, the findings and results will be reviewed. Lastly, in Chapter 5, there will be a summary of findings, conclusions, implications, recommendations for policy and practice, and suggestions for further study.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Linked Learning

“In Long Beach, we’ve been very involved in high school reform, but Linked Learning has ratcheted it up ten-fold. On behalf of my kids, my families, and my community, I can’t thank ConnectEd enough for what you’re helping us do.” Chris Steinhauser, Superintendent, Long Beach Unified School District, as cited in ConnectEd, 2012, p. 1.

“Since 2006, The James Irvine Foundation has made a significant investment in Linked Learning, a promising approach to transforming education in California. In 2009, Irvine launched the California Linked Learning District Initiative in nine California school districts serving more than 150,000 youth.” (Guha et al., 2012, p. 2)

The main activities or actions of the Linked Learning program include bringing together academics, technical education, and real world experience. This formula assists students in gaining an advantage in high school, postsecondary education, and careers. Students follow industry themed pathways such as engineering, arts, medicine, et cetera (Stam, 2011).

There are four components to each pathway: academic, technical, work-based learning opportunities and support services. Rigorous academics features challenging curriculum that meets A-G standards. Real-world experience includes demanding career and technical coursework. Work-based learning entails a range of opportunities including internships. Personalized support activities include social supports such as counseling, with the goal of all students succeeding inside and out of school (Guha et al., 2012, p. 3).
The goals and objectives of the program are fourfold. The pathways are to prepare students for postsecondary education and careers, lead to the full range of postsecondary opportunities, connect academics to real-world applications and to improve student achievement (Connect Ed, 2008).

“Linked Learning is the vehicle with the most promise to implement the challenging Common Core State Standards at the high school level... [and] lead to increased student engagement and achievement. The Common Core is the “what”; Linked Learning [is] the “how.” Both share the same “end in mind”--which is students who are college and career ready.” Pamela Seki, Director, Curriculum, Instruction, & Professional Development, Long Beach Unified School District, as cited in Rustique & Stam, 2012, p. 1.

Counselors are mentioned as “pathway staff” and a part of the “pathway community of practice” in the Linked Learning Certification Criteria indicating accountability, but there is no mention of responsibility or authority. This study hopes to give counselors a voice in terms of their role in Linked Learning.

In order to understand issues relating to the counselors’ roles in a Linked Learning environment, it is important to explore existing literature from the perspectives of scholars, and leaders in the field. Scholars and practitioners alike recognize the need to define the role of counselor. It is vital to examine the background of the problem of counselors’ missing voices on the subject of Linked Learning and investigate counselors’ perceptions of counselor roles (if any) within scholarly literature. Likewise, it is necessary to comb literature for concepts relating to the research under consideration.

This chapter will explore literature in several areas: (a) background relating to the complexities of the role of counselors; (b) potential of counselors as leaders, advocates, collaborators, and systems change agents to effect change in a Linked Learning environment; (c) definitions of counselor roles; (d) ways counselor roles are facilitated
in a Linked Learning environment; (e) in addition, the role counselors perceive for themselves will be examined and compared to what the national standards suggest are appropriate for the role of the counselor and Linked Learning certification standards.

**Historical Background**

The historical context around which this literature is reviewed is that at the national level, in 1958, the National Defense Education Act provided the funds to train counselors (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2005). By the 1980s, comprehensive counseling programs focused on developmental psychology and educational achievement. In 1995, The Education Trust launched the Transforming School Counseling Initiative. Training for counselors focused on equity and access, counselors serving as leaders, advocates, and systemic change agents. In 1998, ASCA created national standards, and the ASCA Model was developed in 2005 (ASCA, 2005). Studies indicate that, as of 2008, (the most recent data available), more than 130,000 counselors work in the nation’s schools (United States Department of Labor, 2011).

**Counseling in the State of California**

The California Department of Education asserts, “California has made important strides in class size reduction, higher academic standards, greater accountability, and improved teacher preparation. The important missing link in these initiatives to improve student learning is the need for more school counselors…Traditionally, California students’ access to counselors varies by grade level, and 29 percent of California school districts have no counseling programs at all. When counseling programs exist, counselors are often asked to add administrative duties such as testing, supervising, and class scheduling. The ratio of students per counselor in this state averages 945 to 1,
compared to the national average of 477 to 1, ranking California last in the nation.”
(California Department of Education [CDE], 2013, p. 1) This number is still well above the ASCA’s (2005) standard of 250 to 1.

The CDE goes on to highlight qualitative and quantitative research that supports the effectiveness of school counselors, including studies that show that professional school counselors:

Have a positive effect on children, have significant influence on discipline problems, are effective in teaching social skills, are effective in helping children with family problems, are effective in teaching students peer mediation skills, play an important role in violence prevention, are effective in reducing victimization and reducing bullying, have a significant influence on modifying the school climate and structure, are effective in assisting high school students with college choices, are proven effective in preventing students from committing suicide, have significant influence on assisting underachieving students, have a positive effect on reducing the dropout rate, are effective in students feeling positive about school and their safety, are effective in having high expectations for students and influencing future plans, are effective in leading classroom guidance increasing student behaviors

These assets and many more can be contributed to counselors across the nation (CDE, 2013). However, with the decrease in number of counselors due to fiscal times, and all of the non-counseling related duties placed upon counselors, it gives the counselors even more ambiguous roles as they attempt to meet the needs of administrators, staff, students, families, and other stakeholders.
Linked Learning State Legislation

According to the LBUSD Linked Learning Alignment to State Legislation September, 2013 fact sheet, (Long Beach Unified School District [LBUSD], 2013), California AB 790 created the Linked Learning District Pilot Program (www.leginfo.legislature.ca.gov)-66 school districts received Pilot Program status. Four additional districts were designated as Mentor districts (including the Long Beach Unified School District.) LBUSD is mentor to six districts in San Diego County beginning in October, 2013.

Additionally in California, SB 1070 is a makeover of SB 70 that puts Linked Learning emphasis on a strong central focus on college and career readiness (www.leginfo.legislature.ca.gov). It provided funding for California AB 790 as well as other initiatives. To address this bill, LBUSD collaborated with Long Beach City College to align skills and curriculum to assure a seamless education from High School to LBCC Career pathways and to the workforce. Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) is currently collaborating with five area community colleges.

Also, California SB 1458 (www.leginfo.legislature.ca.gov) revised the Academic Performance Index (API) to include a 40% college and career readiness measure. In response to this revision, LBUSD has developed the Office of Equity, Access and College and Career Readiness, amongst other measures.

AB 86 California Career Pathways Trust (www.leginfo.legislature.ca.gov) allocated $250 million grant for the development of career pathways. To engage in this bill, Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), Long Beach City College (LBCC), and California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) are collaborating to establish the
Long Beach Collaborative to Advance Learning for Life (LBCALL). Additionally, the LBUSD School Board approved their new Graduate Profile that aligns new Career Technical Education (CTE) Standards and Common Core, and includes business partners. California AB 547 (www.leginfo.legislature.ca.gov) further aligns funding requirements with the needs of high school students by including college and career readiness activities. The Long Beach Unified School District is applying for funding the program at Jordan High school.

Specialized Secondary Programs (SSP) provides start-up funds for the establishment of advanced programs in California high schools. This funding may include the creation of Linked Learning pathways. Three schools in the LBUSD have applied for SSP grants to start new pathways at their sites (Long Beach Unified School District [LBUSD], 2013).

Linked Learning in Long Beach Unified School District

The historical context around Linked Learning is that if one traces back over the past ten years, one can get a birds-eye view of what was occurring in the environment, and behind the scenes to bring Linked Learning into the Long Beach Unified School District. In 2002-2003, Millikan High school was one of two schools to write and receive funding for a three year Small Learning Community (SLC) federal grant (Long Beach Unified School District [LBUSD], N.D.) Millikan High School was the first comprehensive high school in LBUSD to have a Linked Learning Certified Small Learning Community.

Externally, in the fall of 2004, the High School Reform Initiative 1.0 (2004-2009) was published with four main goals: Raise achievement in content areas, close the
achievement gap, improve school culture, and build leadership capacity (LBUSD, n.d.). This Reform Initiative set the stage for a paradigm shift as the vision for high schools changed. During the 2004-2005 school year, Cabrillo High School wrote and received funding for a five year SLC grant. This grant added three more LBUSD schools to the “great reformation” of the LBUSD High Schools.

In October, 2007, Millikan was one of two schools awarded another SLC grant for a five year implementation plan. This expanded opportunities with the financial resources necessary to sustain change. During the 2008-2009 school year, the High School office partnered with stakeholders to conduct a comprehensive Linked Learning needs assessment of LBUSD’s capacity to prepare students for college and careers under the current high school model. Connect Ed (a subsidiary of the James Irvine Foundation) funded the effort with a $125,000 planning grant. This hallmark’s the first mention of “Linked Learning” in LBUSD literature.

In 2009, ConnectEd awarded the High School Office with a two-year $1.175 million grant to support the implementation of Linked Learning within the current Small Learning Community Model (LBUSD, n.d.). Again externally, in the fall 2009, the High School Reform Initiative 2.0 (2009-2014) is published (LBUSD, n.d.).

A year later, Cabrillo High School is one of four awarded another SLC grant for a five year implementation plan anchored in the Linked Learning Core Components. At this time, six high schools are now included. Millikan High School has two specialized programs that have achieved Linked Learning Certification: COMPASS and PEACE. Cabrillo High School has no certified programs at this time, but has programs that are in various stages of qualifying for certification. Other Long Beach Unified pathways that
have obtained Linked Learning certification are the California Academy of Mathematics and Science (CAMS), and Jordan High School has two pathways: ACE and JMAC (Long Beach Unified School District [LBUSD], 2014).

Students, parents, and stakeholders are becoming more familiar with the tenets of Linked Learning. “I’m excited about the possibility of accelerating Linked Learning at Renaissance High School (LBUSD). I would like to see our kids exposed to even more professional disciplines and universities across the nation. I’m pleased to be involved, and to have my child here—it’s a win-win situation for our kids.”  -Carlos Leal, Parent, Long Beach, CA (ConnectEd: The California Center for College and Career [ConnectEd], 2012)

Long Beach Unified School District continues to be a part of the California Linked Learning District Initiative, and now serves as a mentor district to San Diego Unified. According to the Evaluation of the Demonstration Sites in the ConnectEd Network, school counselors wear many hats at Network schools (schools participating in the Linked Learning Initiative). Counselors at Network schools personalize their work with students in unique ways. They tend to do more than counselors at traditional high schools. Some have an open-door policy rather than adhering to a strict schedule. Some run groups, and do less discipline. “The counselors believe that the have better individual interactions with students.” (MPR Associates, INC, 2009, p. 82)

In contrast to Linked Learning pathways, “The traditional separation of academic and vocational curricula…has until recently been cast as a mutually exclusive choice that students must make or that is made for them, so that students who take more vocational classes in high school, have less access to college.” (Stem, 2009, p. 1)
In the Evaluation of the Demonstration Sites in the ConnectEd Network, MPR Associates, Inc. found that, “school counselors play many roles at Network schools (schools that have Linked Learning). Some roles are typical for all college and career counselors. We discovered however, that counselors at many Network sites play additional roles, and approach their work with students in uncommon ways.” (MPR Associates, INC, 2009, p. 82) They went on to report that the greatest distinction between counselors at traditional high schools and those at Network schools is that the counselors in schools with Linked Learning personalize their work with students. One example given is that of a counselor who has an “open-door” policy, rather than scheduling students. Some counselors report spending less time on discipline, and spending more time addressing personal/social, and emotional needs. Overall, counselors at Network schools expressed that they feel they have better one-to-one interactions with students (MPR Associates, INC, 2009). Over the years, the roles of teacher, students, and stakeholders have expanded. As the educational system changes, the role of the counselor should not remain static.

Some more progressive districts follow an SLC model where there is a “school within a school” approach. “Drawing on the history of small alternative schools and schools within schools that have succeeded in creating more nurturing environments for students and their teachers, the notion of breaking large high schools into smaller units has found favor as a way to increase personalization, relevance, and rigor of coursework, and teacher collaboration. …Most result from converting large high schools into several subdivisions, which might be identified by a theme or become autonomous schools with their own administration and budget.” (David, 2008, p. 84) Teachers are now called
upon to create more interdisciplinary lessons, and collaborate with their colleagues at a
greater measure than before. Students are required to take more rigorous coursework,
and make connections between what they are learning, and how it connects to their
future. The role of the counselor varies dependent on the school structure as well. Here
again, the role of counselor needs to change with the times to support the educational
reform system.

The California School Counseling Association reports that, “Overall, there is a
serious disconnect between school counselor training, best practices in counseling, and
what is actually expected of school counselors in the field” (The California Association
of School Counselors [CASC], 2007, p. 7). Even though there is an increase in the focus
on student success, state and federal laws regarding school counseling are limited.
Counselors have remained largely left out of major school reform initiatives (College
Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). Presently, confusion and misunderstanding
regarding the proper role of the counselor on a campus remains a part of the profession.
Currently, in effort to do more with less, duties include, but are not limited to: personal
counseling, scheduling, testing, college and career readiness, teaching, and other non-
guidance activities such as administrative and clerical tasks (Schimmel, 2008).

One reason that counselors may not always meet the needs of all students is role
clarity and mission definition. Since the inception of the school counseling profession in
the 1900s. There have been many paradigm shifts regarding the roles, responsibilities,
and practices of school counselors. Their roles have been reshaped, and there has been
an increase in accountability for counselors. Some of the most significant changes have
occurred over the past fifteen years. Specifically, these changes have included a renewed professional identity as “professional school counselor.”

Equally problematic, one landmark study asserts that the day-to-day reality for counselors, falls short of the ideal they envision (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). The literature review that follows will include a discussion on the role(s) of the counselor in a Linked Learning Environment at the high school level, counselors’ perceptions of these roles, and if there is an alignment with policy standards and practice. Although there are research articles about traditional high school models, and Small Learning Communities, the research on Linked Learning is limited. This is even more-so the case when it comes to the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment. Evaluation reports completed by outside research firms funded by the James Irvine Foundation do discuss Support Services that include college and career counseling, but the researcher could not locate any stand alone, in-depth, peer reviewed research that is comprehensive, and gives counselors a voice in their roles.

In Search of an Identity

This review of the literature will first examine the role(s) that a counselor plays in a Linked Learning environment. Next, it will consider how counselors perceive their role(s). In closing, this review of literature will explore how counselors are actually utilized in the day-to-day operations of the campus, and if their duties match Linked Learning Certification Standards. The subsequent review of the literature will be analyzed through the lens of community counseling theory, two major constructs found in the ASCA standards and the skills as set forth by the TSCI. These three frames are particularly instructive when paired with the community counseling theory.
In addition, the ASCA has defined a counselor’s role in their National Standards. Their four themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change (ASCA, 2005) will be utilized to shed light on the roles and assist this author in the development of role definition. The literature review will be organized according to these themes. The first theme is advocacy. Counselors advocate for students and their programs. The second theme is collaboration/consultation. Counselors collaborate and consult with all stakeholders. The third theme is systemic change. School counselors assess for systemic barriers to academic success, and work to remove them (ASCA, 2005). The final theme is leadership. School counselors serve as leaders who are at the forefront of system-wide change. The purpose of this literature review, therefore, is to examine existing research regarding counselors and the role(s) they play in a Linked Learning environment.

**Role Theory**

Historically, Role Theory is, “concerned with the study of behaviors that are characteristic of persons within contexts and with various processes that presume, produce, explain, or are affected by those behaviors” (Biddle, 1986, p.4). It hypothesizes that individuals behave in predictable and distinctive ways depending on their respective social identities and differing situations (Biddle, 1986). The concept of roles is one of the most widely researched concepts in the social sciences (Biddle, 1986). Biddle defines it as “behaviors that are characteristics of one or more persons in a context” (p.6). Roles relate to social positions, expectations, norms and beliefs, as well as the context and function of behavior within a social system (Biddle, 1986). Biddle (1986) concluded that, “On one hand, we are asserting that at least some behaviors are associated with sets of persons, rather than with the entire society or persons as individuals. Further, the
discussion of role theory shows that on the other hand, we are also suggesting that persons who share roles are also likely to share a common identity” (p.5). Essentially, individuals in certain roles act in accordance with their role due to learned behaviors (Biddle, 1986). Others hold expectations for roles and reinforce appropriate behaviors for those in the roles (Biddle, 1986). The further analysis revealed that expectations of those in roles are learned through experience (Biddle, 1986). Research through this empowering lens reveals key themes that are often mentioned in association with it. Role Theory has four basic assumptions: role-taking, role-consensus, role-compliance, and role-conflict.

First, role-taking refers to an individual taking an accepted role that is conferred upon him/her by his/her employer. Next, role-consensus speaks to the role-consensus between the employer and employee for an organization (school) to function properly. There needs to be a consensus regarding the expectations of the role. Next, role-compliance states that each role has a set of behaviors that are well-defined and consistently adhered to by employees. Lastly, role-conflict asserts that conflict will arise when there is a conflict of expectations associated with the roles (Biddle, 1986).

Role as Advocate

The ASCA defines advocacy as “actively supporting causes, ideas, or policies that promote and assist student academic, career, and personal/social needs” (ASCA, 2005, p. 129). A mixed-method study indicated that counselors provide advocacy support because they hold unique positions in schools; they have the ability to understand the whole student (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). According to the California Standards for the School Counseling Profession, school counselors advocate for students
by promoting motivation, interaction, and choice (CASC, 2007). Counselors use their advocacy skills to hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all students.

School counselors are also called upon to be advocates in social justice issues. Counselors need to advocate for students so that every student is capable of graduating from high school ready to succeed in college and a career. This notion rings true amongst noted authors in the field, “professional school counselors must be active in advocacy for increasing access and quality of social and educational services for students from marginalized communities” (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007, p. 331). The ASCA agrees that counselors serve as educational leaders who are ideally situated to serve as advocates so that all students meet high standards. They believe that one aspect of advocacy is, “the process of actively identifying underrepresented students and supporting them in their efforts to perform at their highest level of academic achievement” (ASCA, 2005, p. 129). Researchers have also found that, “Although comparable percentages of students across ethnic and socioeconomic groups aspire to enter college, smaller percentages of African Americans and Latinos than Whites actually enroll.” (Bryan, Holcomb-Mccoy, Moore-Thomas, & Day-Vines, 2009, p. 282) In this work and in related references it was observed that, “School counselors can be essential to developing social capital for students who do not have access to social capital through other means.” (McKillip, Rawls, & Barry, n.d., p. 56) The same author goes on to assert that there is a need to find ways to support traditionally underrepresented students in their preparation for and pursuit of post-secondary options.(McKillip et al., n.d.)
In one study, nearly all (99 percent) of the counselors agreed that they should exercise leadership by advocating for students, even if others in the school do not see counselors as leaders (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). Of that 99 percent, 76 percent not only agree, but strongly agree with that sentiment (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). About 75 percent of counselors rate their role of student advocate as one of their two or three most important contributions on their campus’ (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). School counselors advocate for students as evidenced earlier. They also advocate for other stakeholders, and their programs. Research regarding counselors’ perceptions of their advocacy skills revealed that their use of advocacy skills had a significant effect on how their roles were defined at the site level. This also impacted their programs’ implementation at the building level. Other authors have noted that counselors, who are unwilling or unable to use their advocacy skills, are less likely to assume leadership roles (Clemens et al., 2009). Developing advocacy skills takes practice. A review of the literature shows that when counselors use their advocacy skills, their programs are more likely to be implemented in the way that the school counselor feels best meets student needs, which is crucial due to the finding that an important aspect of leadership is advocating for one’s profession (McMahon et al., 2009).

Role as Collaborator

Curry and DeVoss posited that school counselors can serve in a pivotal role to collaboratively lead school transformation (Curry & DeVoss, 2009). Well published counselor educator, Dr. Christopher Sink of Seattle Pacific University, advises that, effective leaders share a vision and work to create an environment where all stakeholders
want to contribute (Sink, 2009). Dr. Sink, in a related article goes on to say, “Acknowledging and honoring the voices and experiences of the students and those individuals who are a part of the students’ support systems is an important Caring Community of Learning practice.” (Sink, 2008, p. 111) Counselors are uniquely situated in education to work collaboratively to meet the mission. “Given both their position at the fulcrum of information flow regarding students and their performance in school, and their training to communicate these data to others, school counselors act as leaders by collaborating and consulting with other stakeholders” (Janson et al., p. 99). The ASCA agrees that school counselors should work collaboratively with stakeholders as a part of the student support services team (ASCA, 2005). However, the research reveals that counselors may be working as islands or silos, and not embracing fully the role of collaborator. One study declares that the notion that leadership occurs through interactions among stakeholders is one that school counselors have not fully embraced (Jansen et al., 2009). In a recent article, the executive director of The ASCA noted that, “School counselors should know where they get their power, and how to work with others who are in various positions of power.” (Wong, 2013, p. 25) Dr. Wong went on to add, “School counselors who are effective leaders know that the success of the school counseling program relies on cooperation from teachers, parents, and others; collaborations are crucial.” (Wong, 2013, p. 24)

School counselors create teams by encouraging other stakeholders to collaborate towards common goals (ASCA, 2005). In one particular study, over 90% of counselors stated that effective leadership was initially based on collaboration between principals and counselors (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). One-third of the
principals reported that they expected their school counselor to function as a collaborative case consultant (Amatea & Clark, 2005). One way counselors actualize this is by providing responsive services. “Delivering culturally competent responsive services to improve student academic performance and to address behaviors that act as barriers to achievement is an essential element of a school counseling program’s arsenal for addressing the numerous needs associated with the achievement gap.” (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2011, p. 223) Researchers have arrived at the conclusion that, “It is interesting that school counselors see themselves as mental health professionals to a much greater extent than do their administrators.” (Brown, Dahlbeck, & Sparkman-Barnes, 2006, p. 334)

Responsive services are utilized to identify and intervene for students who are need of additional support. “The reality is that school counselors cannot serve all of the students who present with mental health disorders without building alliances within the school and the surrounding community.” (Kaffenberger & O’Rorke-Trigiani, n.d., p. 330) There is an increased need to collaborate with the school and outside communities to assist students in crisis. “Given the number of students requiring mental health counseling, school counselors must identify resources and build alliances in their communities to increase their ability to help more students and increase access to mental health services.” (Kaffenberger & O’Rorke-Trigiani, n.d., p. 324) Another study confirms that, “Expanded school mental health programs are a growing movement in the United States, which represents partnerships between school and community mental health agencies.” (Brown, Dahlbeck, & Sparkman-Barnes, 2006, p. 333) Another author
recommended that school leaders and community mental health agencies should have meetings to encourage interdisciplinary training (Brown et al., 2006, p. 335).

Researchers have also found that, “School counselors feel they are qualified to provide mental health counseling to students but that the nature of their job precludes them from doing so on a large scale.” (Carlson & Kees, n.d., p. 218) In this same study, eighty-eight percent of the participants reported that they don’t have enough time to provide needed services for their students because of demands placed on them by the needs of their schools (Carlson & Kees, n.d.). In spite of time constraints, school counselors still make up the largest number of school based mental health providers by providing responsive services and classroom guidance (Carlson & Kees, n.d.). These services are crucial in that the mental health needs of youth are a growing concern in the United States (Carlson & Kees, n.d.).

Perhaps this statement sums it up best, “For the sake of all students, let us not forget the counseling in professional school counseling.” (DeKruyf, Auger, & Trice-Black, n.d., p. 279) In conclusion, one way counselors use their collaboration skills is to work with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support by providing responsive services for students and their families.

**Role as Systems Change Agent**

Counselors are called upon to be systems change agents in regards to social justice issues. Counselors are encouraged to step up in their role as social change agents by getting actively involved in the community, and realizing issues in the broader society (Zalaquett & D’ Andrea, 2007). Other authors agree with that sentiment, “Preparing for the professional roles of change agent and promoter of social justice is crucial and
involves a personal commitment to affirming diversity” (Curry & DeVoss, 2009, p. 66). The National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC) agrees that nothing should limit students’ opportunities. To ameliorate this issue, counselors, through advocacy and active concern, create transformative conditions and systemic change. One of NCTSC’s primary goals is to ensure that counselors play a critical role in the equity agenda (http://www.edtrust.org). Counselors’ possess a birds-eye view of the student and system. This lens allows them to note the strengths, challenges, and propose a plan of action to better meet the needs of the students and school. A study shows that, “No other individual in the school hears, sees, and knows more about events and individuals both inside and outside of the building that the school counselor.” (Brooks-McNamara & Pedersen, 2006, p. 258)

Counselors use their role as systems change agent to get to know pathway students and become familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway program. The focus on systemic change has led to a new paradigm in the role of school counseling. No longer are counselors regarded as solely direct service providers, but rather as essential educators who utilize their unique skill set and knowledge base to effect system change to better serve their students and stakeholders. The ASCA agrees that systemic change occurs when practices are reviewed in light of data. This change happens in the school setting, often led by school counselors (ASCA, 2005).

The influence of the relationship between counselor and principal is an important one. They must work together to implement a Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP). The findings of this study indicated that school counselors can effect change when they advocate for themselves (Clemens et al., 2009). An additional factor is
that it is imperative that counselors and principals have a good working relationship for a counseling program to be successful (Leuwerke, Walker, & Shi, 2009). One study implied that principal’s perceptions of counselors as change agents show a disconnection from the views of counselors. In this study, only 3 out of 26 administrators viewed their counselor as essential in implementing system-wide change (Mason & McMahon, 2009). Although a small sampling, it bears noting. In 2011, counselors reported a need for change to the education system. Researchers have also identified that over half of the counselors surveyed, (55 percent) felt that significant changes need to be made to improve student success (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). This same study highlights that one of the major themes in the counselors’ perceptions is that counselors see, “a broken system in need of reform,” and “counselors provide unique under-utilized contributions to schools” (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011, p. 12). Similarly, counselors want to help lead these reform efforts and ask for more support to fulfill their mission (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011).

In an attempt to define and elaborate on the unique nature of counselors as systems change agents in the area of social justice issues, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) defines Systemic Change as, “change affecting the entire system; transformational; change affecting more than an individual or series of individual’s focus of the change is upon the dynamic of the environment, not the individual” (ASCA, 2005, p. 131). Systemic change occurs when policies and procedures are examined and changed in light of new data. Change occurs when critical stakeholders get involved, and these efforts are often led by the school counselor (ASCA, 2005). Nearly all counselors reported to support a strategic approach to promote college
and career readiness by graduation. However, almost half of the counselors in lower-income schools don’t think they have the needed support and resources to carry out the mission (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). Nine in ten counselors believe that equity and access should be the mission of the school, but only 38 percent of all counselors and 32 percent in high poverty schools see this as a reality (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011).

Nine percent went as far as to say that a complete overhaul is needed (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). Over eighty percent of counselors report that it is important or very important to implement a Comprehensive School Guidance Program (Clemens et al., 2009). This is a positive finding for the counseling profession because principals are more apt to value Comprehensive School Counseling Programs when their counselors do as well. The authors had expected that principals wield the power to help shape, as well as the timing, and outcome of a counselor’s efforts to implement a comprehensive program (Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007). Counselors act as systems change agents in order to support students, and the schools they serve.

**Role as Leader**

Mahatma Gandhi’s famous quote, “We need to be the change we want to see happen. We are the leaders we have been waiting for,” is prevalent amongst writings pertaining to counselors. This may be due largely to the value placed on leadership by numerous counselor-related agencies and advocacy groups.

In order to understand the influence of the school site level on the individual counselors, this study highlights that many school counselor-related agencies have
weighed in as to what role the counselor should fulfill on an educational campus. Many of them agree that school counselors should serve as leaders, the attribute specifically deemed as appropriate by the majority of researchers. “The school counselor’s leadership skills are important to the successful implementation of new or remodeled programs at the school, district, or state level. In this leadership role, school counselors served as change agents, collaborators, and advocates” (ASCA, 2005, p. 10).

Often times, counselors are called upon to be leaders of social justice issues, and educational reformers. The Education Trust’s National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC), has created a New Vision for School Counseling. This vision defines school counselor leadership as including activities that encourage counselors to view their schools through an equity lens (NCTSC). In the ASCA’s Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, 2005), it identifies school counselors as, “leaders and advocates who affirm diversity while promoting equitable access to educational resources, excellence in education, and postsecondary education for all students” (ASCA, 2005, p. 121). This theme aligns heavily with that of role as leader. Researchers suggest that counselors are called upon to be leaders, and they are expected to help stakeholders identify barriers to student success (McMahon, Mason, & Paisley, 2009). Researchers have started to look at some leadership characteristics, however, little is known regarding leadership behaviors that are practiced or not practiced (Mason & McMahon, 2009). The authors go on to add that counselors are a vital component at a school site although leadership has not historically been associated with school counseling, and currently there are no constructs of school counselor leadership (Mason & McMahon, 2009). With continued research, school counselors as leaders can be visualized in meaningful and
relevant ways (Curry & DeVoss, 2009). One group of authors asserted an opposing view
in that they found that a counselor’s role has received considerable attention in literature.
They believe that now the focus has shifted to finding solutions (Clemens, Milsom, &
Cashwell, 2009).

The College Board found that almost unanimously, counselors agreed upon the
importance of exercising leadership in the school setting (College Board Advocacy and
Policy Center, 2011). The literature reveals that the role of the leader on a high school
campus is largely determined by the relationship between the school counselor and the
principal. School counselors’ perceptions of this relationship directly affect their abilities
to assume their role as leader. One study noted that this relationship is a process of
influencing role development that occurs through exchanges between a counselor and an
administrator (Clemens, Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009). The authors reasoned that,
relationship quality between a principal and counselor proved to be a primary factor in
determining a counselor’s ability to fulfill a leadership role. Using communication and
counseling skills such as active listening, transparency, and dialogue to improve
relational trust, were all suggested as one attempts to take on a leadership role (Clemens
et al., 2009). Likewise, research implies that there is no set construct of how to be
regarded as a leader on a campus. It varies with context. There is also variance in how
school counselors lead at each school site. In these ways, one author found that the more
leadership behaviors, practices and models that a counselor is familiar with and utilizes,
the better the effectiveness of that counselor (Janson et al., 2009). One study elaborated
that many of the high school counselors surveyed felt that the more skills they possessed
helped them to establish credibility for being viewed as a leader by others (Janson et al.,
2009). This study corroborated that these same counselors also felt that having high quality interactions with others at the site assisted them in obtaining leadership status (Janson et al., 2009).

According to the literature review, counselors assuming leadership roles at their sites vary greatly. Helping counselors understand the importance of leadership is a key in getting counselors to see their new roles and transforming counseling programs (Mason & McMahon, 2009). School counselors should become more aware of where they are in the process of implementing a Comprehensive School Counseling Program, and the skills and knowledge necessary to make progress (Dahir et al., 2009). The ASCA National Model recommends that school counselors act as leaders to support students (Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). Other authors offer the same findings that school counselors’ leadership practices may influence the comprehensive program that they provide (Shillingford & Lambie, 2010).

In another survey of counselors, over 80% say their administration supports counselors taking a leadership role. Of that number, over 40% report that the administration somewhat supports, and about another 40% perceive that the administration strongly supports the counselor taking on a leadership role (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011).

Counselors report a disconnection between their personal commitment to promoting college and career readiness, and the commitment of their principals (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). Counselors use their leadership skills to guide decisions about postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits. Nearly all (95 percent) of counselors are in favor of additional support, time, and empowerment for
leadership to be able to give students what they need for college (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). Three-quarters of counselors in high poverty schools reported wanting to spend an increased amount of time building a college-going culture (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). A study showed that, “Students who visited their counselor for college-related information were more likely to enroll in postsecondary education and at four-year institutions in particular. Results also demonstrated that the influence of school based college counseling varied based on socio-economic status and the low-SES students were likely to yield the most benefit from their relationship with a school counselor.” (Belasco, 2013, p. 3).

Eighty-seven percent of counselors support receiving training to help students align the jobs they want with the skills they will need to succeed in those jobs (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). This desire aligns with the ASCA’s Career Development Standards, “Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions. Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training, and the world of work” (ASCA, 2005, p. 83). “The career-ready practices alone won’t prepare a student for college and career readiness. Career readiness strategies that include career guidance and counseling are critical components of a student’s experience (Folkers, 2012, p. 36.)” Students agree according to one study, “Students appear to be much more satisfied with their counselors when they have quality interactions that offer them access to information about colleges and the application process.” (McKillip et al., n.d., p. 54) They go on to conclude that school staff should carefully consider how the school counseling department is organized, and make early and ongoing college help a priority.
The new Common Core State Standards report on the Role of the School Counselor agrees that, “School counselors are uniquely positioned to influence and implement many of the school wide goals and initiatives to ensure that all students are college and career ready.” (Achieve, College Summit, NASSP, NAESP, 2013, p. 7)

This important document summarizes the transition to the CCSS by asserting that the CCSS will most affect school in terms of implementation. “In placing every student on a pathway to college and career readiness, our schools are embarking on a journey into uncharted waters that will challenge our willingness to learn and our resolve to persist in the face of adversity. Underlying this Action Brief is a belief in the power of collaboration and collective action. No one person alone can possibly affect the kind of transformation in school culture necessary to successfully implement the CCSS. School counselors must work to help build collaborative communities of learners. Employing the high-leverage suggestions in concert will produce a synergistic effect that will transform the school culture to support each student, regardless of zip code or circumstances, in their effort to become college and career ready.” (Achieve, College Summit, NASSP, NAESP, 2013, p. 14)

Case load sizes adversely affect the counselors’ ability to meet face to face with all students to complete Individual Student Plans. A study in Connecticut concluded that the student to counselor ratios matter, and what counselors do with their work time is very important to the success of their high school students (Lapan, Whitcomb, & Aleman, n.d.). This study goes on to assert that when the ratio of students to professional school counselor is lower, there are fewer suspensions and fewer disciplinary incidents. Additionally, that as per-pupil expenditures decreased, the student to school counselor
ratios significantly increased (Lapan et al., n.d.). A study in Missouri concurred that smaller student to school counselor ratios positively affected students in terms of graduation rates and lower disciplinary incidents (Lapan, Gysbers, Stanley, & Pierce, n.d.).

Other findings from the research include that the counselors and principals were asked to rate the importance and presence of counselor participation on school leadership teams. Although both parties value counselors participating in school leadership, they have very different perceptions as to how well that is actually being played out at the site level (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). Yet another study purports, “Principals desire school counselors who are communicative, systemic in their work, student-focused, and able to take on leadership roles in the schools” (Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007, p. 363). However, there is conflicting evidence whether these expectations are unanimous. In a similar study, only twelve percent of the respondents gave priority to the school counselor taking an active leadership role (Amatea & Clark, 2005).

The educational outcome is that, “It appears that although leadership practices have been identified as a beneficial role for school counselors, internal factors may exist that have hindered leadership practices being implemented” (Shillingford & Lambie, 2010, p. 211). The researchers surmised that the most important aspect that determines principal support is when the principal experiences the value-added by counselors in terms of their impact on the school and stakeholders as a whole (Dollarhide et al., 2007). Both of these studies lead to indicate that educating the principal in terms of how counselors should be utilized, has a positive impact on the role of counselor, and the
minimization of completing non-essential tasks (Leuwerke et al., 2009). Counselors utilize their leadership skills to guide decisions about post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits and assist students by individual student planning.

**Role-Taking**

Role-Taking refers to an individual taking an accepted role that is conferred upon him/her by their employer. A review of the literature has revealed that counselors willingly assume the roles of Leader, Advocate, Collaborator, and Systems Change Agent. Although the specifics of those roles remain unclear, the school counselor embraces the roles as defined by the school system. Numerous entities including, but not limited to, the CASC, The Education Trust, The College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, the NCTSC, and the Center for Excellence in School Counseling (CESCAL) have all weighed in on what roles a counselor should assume when defining his/her role. Counselors take on the roles as prescribed by federal and state laws as well as standards and policies at the county, district and school levels.

**Counselor Perception of Role**

The counselors report, “A broken system that does not align with their aspirations. They call for changes to the educational system, view themselves as leaders in effecting change, and want more support” (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011, p. 5). Counselors’ want a voice, and to have opportunities to express their opinions, however, little research has been done regarding school counselors’ perceptions of comprehensive school counseling programs (Clemens et al., 2009). Dr. Trish Hatch concurred that no research has discussed counselor beliefs about various counseling program components that align with the ASCA National Model (Hatch & Chen-Hayes,
2008). However, not all the literature was unanimous on this point. A year later, the results noted that the analysis of school counselors’ perceptions revealed varying degrees of commitment to the implementation of a Comprehensive School Counseling Program (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009). This contrast is perhaps due to the year lapse of time.

No literature could be located regarding counselors’ perceptions of their role in a Linked Learning environment. This may be due to the fact that it is a fairly new initiative, and that it is not yet wide-spread through the nation, it is only in select districts in California.

Role-Consensus

Role-consensus speaks to the role-consensus between the employer and employee. For an organization (school) to function properly, there needs to be a consensus regarding the expectations of the role. The principal serves as the employer on a high school campus, whereas the counselor is an employee. Based on the literature review, it is clear that principals want to support counselors in the area of assuming leadership responsibilities. Research revealed that over 80% of counselors say their administration supports taking a leadership role (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011).

Overall, the research also indicates that counselors attribute the ability to take on a leadership position to a high-quality relationship with the principal. Although principals and counselors share role-consensus on the value of counselors acting as leaders, the actual practice may not be evident. The construct as to how to be a leader varies. In the area of counselors serving in the role of advocate, literature shows that counselors can serve as valuable advocates helping their schools meet national standards, but advocacy
is not a skill that counselors may feel comfortable utilizing. In addition, school counselors’ use of advocacy skills was positively influenced by the quality of the relationship with the principal (Clemens et al., 2009). Advocacy skills may be mutually agreed upon as highly valued, but minimally utilized. It appears that the role-consensus in regards to counselor as advocate is favorable, but perhaps not fully operationalized. Counselors serving in the role as collaborator would also indicate a strong correlation of role-consensus between counselor and principal. There is consensus regarding the role, but the practice may be misaligned with the ideal. In terms of counselors fulfilling the role of systems change agent, there seems to be congruence in the belief that counselors should be serving in this capacity. Counselors and principals can come to a consensus that it is important for counselors to be agents of systemic change, but the practicality of it may not align with theory. In review, according to the literature, there appears to be a general role consensus that counselors should lead, advocate, collaborate, and act as systems change agents on a high school campus, but more research is necessary to determine if this role-consensus in theory actually plays out in reality, and specifically in a Linked Learning environment.

**Role-Compliance**

Sixty-five percent of school counselors give their schools credit for seeing their value in building relational trust with students (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). Based on the findings of the study, over half of the counselors agree that their school takes advantage of this skill (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011).
Role-Conflict

Much of the research considers the impact of the gap between the counselors’ ideal role(s) and what they are experiencing in reality. Counselors reported major gaps between what they would ideally like to see and what they are experiencing in schools (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). “More than 8 in 10 counselors report that a top mission of schools should be to ensure that all students complete 12th grade ready to succeed in college and careers, yet only 30% of all school counselors and 19% of those in high poverty schools see this as their school’s mission in reality” (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011, p. 5). Also in this study, about 60% of the counselors see their training to work with the whole student as a major contribution, but only 40% see this as well utilized in their schools (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). Research revealed a 50 percentage-point gap between the ideal and reality of helping students mature and develop, a 43 percentage-point gap for the mission of inspiring students to reach their full potential, and achieve their goals, a 41 percentage-point gap between the ideal and reality of addressing student problems, and a 38 percentage-point gap between the ideal and reality of ensuring all students graduate from high school (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011).

The research also revealed that the majority of counselors would like to spend more time on specific, targeted activities that align to the ASCA’s National Model. Sixty-seven percent would like to spend less time on administrative tasks (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). These tasks are not endorsed by the ASCA. Not only were inappropriate job duties an issue for counselors, but also large caseloads that effect student contact. Differences have been recognized in that the average reported
caseload for counselors surveyed was 368 students, much greater than the ASCA recommendation of 250 students per counselor (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011).

**Conclusion**

Over the course of this chapter, literature was explored in several areas: (a) background relating to the complexities of the role of counselors; (b) potential of counselors as leaders, advocates, collaborators, and systems change agents to effect change in a Linked Learning environment; (c) definitions of counselor roles; (d) ways counselor roles are facilitated in a Linked Learning environment; (e) In addition, the role counselors perceive for themselves in the Linked Learning environment was examined and compared to what the national standards suggest are appropriate for the role of the counselor.

The four themes of the role of advocate, collaborator, systems change agent, and leadership are consistent with the research questions addressed in this study. Counselors hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all students using the ASCA theme of Advocacy. Counselors work with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support through the ASCA’s theme of Collaboration. Counselors know pathway students and are familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway program using the ASCA’s concept of Systems Change Agent. Counselors act as leaders to guide decisions about post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits.

In summary, the literature review revealed that counselors are in search of an identity and voice especially in a Linked Learning environment. Role theory literature
demonstrates that counselors are assuming many roles, not all of which have consensus, and some are actually conflicting with the ASCA ideals. Research shows that counselors are taking on the role of advocate for their students and programs to hold high expectations and support. They are employing direct school services that are preventative in nature such as delivering a school guidance curriculum to all students. Counselors are serving in the role of advocate as they provide indirect student services, in the form of working with other stakeholders to team and collaborate to provide responsive services to help them identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support. Counselors take on the role of systems change agents to provide indirect school services that result in comprehensive, lasting change by providing systems support to get to know all of their students in general, as well as their pathway program’s unique characteristics. Lastly, counselors act as leaders as they provide direct student services in the form of individual student planning to guide decisions about postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits.

The School Based Community Counseling Conceptual Framework (SBCCCF) proved to be a useful lens to view the literature in regard to the role of counselor on a high school campus, how counselors perceive their roles, and if their practices align with the ASCA’s National Standards. Using ASCA’s four themes of leader, advocacy, collaboration/coordination, and systemic change was equally helpful in guiding the process. However, the literature regarding counselors in a Linked Learning environment, specifically, left the researcher desiring more information.

In conclusion, this concept, the role of a counselor in a Linked Learning environment, has been insufficiently studied. If a component such as this is missing from
the literature, it is difficult to study the rest of the components from an effectiveness standpoint. All of this background serves to set the stage for this study, which explores the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment. Literature-based insights into the challenging world of counselors and the conceptualization of “counselor leadership in Linked Learning” demonstrate the need for closer study in these areas. In addition, a review of the current literature in these areas reveals a lack of counselors’ voices in the conversation about Linked Learning.

The literature on the role of counselor on a high school campus in the areas of leader, advocate, collaborator, and systems change agent revealed that counselors have no voice. This was exemplified in that they have the knowledge of how to take on the roles, but they have not been invited to the table at the national, state, district, and school site levels to help define their role. A review of the studies has shown that in spite of clarity of role definition, counselors are uniquely positioned to make a big difference in schools (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). The authors summed up their findings with an assertion that even though there are nearly as many school counselors as administrators in the United States, counselors have been largely left out of the education reform agenda (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011.)

The CASC sums it up best, “Overall there is a serious disconnect between school counselors training, best practices in counseling, and what is actually expected of school counselors in the field” (CASC, 2007, p. 7). As a possible explanation for this discrepancy, this dilemma could be a result of a lack of communication. Over half of principals surveyed report no knowledge of the ASCA National Model (Leuwerke et al., 2009). Nonetheless, the authors conceded that in spite of the multiple roles counselors
play in both the academic and nonacademic realms, research shows that the work of counselors is linked to high student aspirations and outcomes (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). Finally, it is evident that through the school counselor’s leadership, advocacy, collaboration, counseling, and the effective use of data, they minimize barriers for students so they can experience increased opportunities to achieve success (ASCA, 2005).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Counselors today have many responsibilities and roles (such as leader, advocate, collaborator, and systems change agent.) The scholarly literature concerning Linked Learning overlooks the roles of counselors. As a result, the voices of counselors are missing in the dialogue about Linked Learning. Moreover, the concept of “counselor roles” itself remains nebulous. It is not known what a counselor’s role is in a Linked Learning environment. Being situated as school counselors gives them a unique position in being able to lead, advocate, collaborate and act as systems change agents, but too little is known about their perceptions of the concept.

In order to explore counselors’ perceptions of their roles, it is important to ask them to define their roles as they pertain to Linked Learning. It is also important for them to explain their perceptions of these roles. Without counselors’ voices regarding their roles in a Linked Learning environment, it is difficult to study all aspects of the roles on campus in relation to one another.

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do counselors hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all students?

2. How do high school counselors work with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support?
3. To what extent do counselors know pathway students and are they familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway program?

4. How do counselors guide decisions about post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits?

Due to this study seeking counselors’ definitions and perceptions of the widely-varied, elusively-defined concept of “counselor roles,” this study necessitated a qualitative design. According to Creswell (2009), a qualitative study allows the researcher to explore topics that have not been extensively studied or written about (Creswell, 2009). Moreover, this study was a naturalistic inquiry, that sought perceptions derived from lived experiences. Qualitative research was the most suitable method for this inquiry. This was a qualitative study utilizing interviews.

Sites

This study focused upon a small group of counselors. These counselors hold positions at sites within one school district, at two different public schools. One on the schools is on the East side of town, one on the West side of town. Both are located in a large, urban school district in Los Angeles County in Southern California. The area covered by the district ranges from schools located in or near downtown areas to suburban bedroom communities with concentrations of smaller business and retail establishments. This study did not extend into any remote, rural, or universally affluent territory. In addition, several public universities and community colleges are located in or near the boundaries of the school district.

The counselors asked to participate in this study were recruited from high schools, and interviews took place at their sites. The schools are traditional 9-12 models. The
The rationale for choosing these high school sites and counselors for this study was that they are both in the process, or have already have pathways that are Linked Learning certified. In addition, a homogeneous sample was essential to the design of the study. Both of the sites are accessible to each other within a half-hour or shorter drive on surface streets.

**Robert A. Millikan High School**

Robert A. Millikan High School is a comprehensive public school located in the East Side of Long Beach, CA. It is one of Long Beach Unified School District’s five comprehensive high schools. Opened in 1956, the school serves around 4,000 students. Almost 57% of the students qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. In addition, 50% of the students live outside of Millikan’s boundaries. The school’s ethnic makeup is about 56% Hispanic/Latino, 26% White, 9% African American, 3% Asian, 3% Filipino, and 3% other. The special education department serves almost 175 students (Millikan School Profile, 2013).

In 2003, Millikan received a grant through the United States Department of Education to develop Small Learning Communities (SLCs) to promote academic success. There are six Small Learning Communities: QUEST (Questioning, Understanding, and Engaging Success through Technology), Global Technology, GREEN (Generating Respect for the Earth, Environment, and Nature), PEACE (Personal Success through Empowerment, Academic Achievement, Character, and Education), and COMPASS (Community of Musicians, Performers Artists, and Social Scientists), and MBA (Millikan Business Academy.) (Millikan School Profile, 2013).
The class of 2012 Senior Exit survey boasted that most of Millikan’s High School’s 833 graduates planned to attend college. Forty-four percent were planning on attending a four-year university, and 46% planned to enroll at a community college (Millikan School Profile, 2013).

Millikan High School has been recognized as one of the top 5% of high schools in the United States by Newsweek magazine. It also serves as a National AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) Demonstration School (SARC, 2013).

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo High School

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo High School is a comprehensive public school located on the West Side of Long Beach, CA. It is one of Long Beach Unified School District’s five comprehensive high schools. The campus is a fifty-five million dollar facility, situated on sixty three acres. Opened in 1995, the school serves around 3,100 students. The schools ethnic makeup is about 67% Hispanic/Latino, 16% African American, 9% Filipino, 3% Asian, 3% Pacific Islander, and 1% White. Cabrillo High School is a Title 1 school based on having 89% of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch (SARC, 2013).

In 2005, Cabrillo received a federal grant for five years (Pathways/Linked Learning.) to develop Small Learning Communities (SLCs) to promote academic success. There are seven Small Learning Communities: University Scholars (Rigorous and academically challenging to prepare students for the most selective colleges), CHOC (Cabrillo Health Occupations and Careers), CED (Cabrillo Engineering and Design), SACMAA (Specialized Academy of Computer Media, Arts and Animation), CAB (Cabrillo Academy of Business), ACCESS (Academy of College and Career Exploration
for Student Success-9th grade), and CAL-J (Cabrillo Academy of Law and Justice). The CED program is Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Certified, and the CAL-J program is California Partnership Academy (CPA).

This urban school setting boasts a brand new aquatic center that opened in late 2013, as well as state-of-the-art gym and stadium. Location scouts are frequently using the site for film shoots including a regular guest, the television show, *Glee*. Cabrillo High School also serves as a National AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) Demonstration School.

**Sample**

Even though the sampling method of this proposed study is relatively homogeneous, minor differences will still provide insight into the nature of the issue under question. Twelve counselors were interviewed. A total of five male, and seven female participated. The criterion was that they are counselors working in a Linked Learning Environment at Millikan or Cabrillo High Schools in the Long Beach Unified School District.

To insure credibility of the data, the researcher used criterion-based sampling. Rather than convenience sampling (finding any counselor willing to participate at any kind of school), the use of criterion-based sampling allows the sample base to function as its own triangulation. Similar counselors at similar schools with similar levels of experience could corroborate each other’s data.
FIGURE 2. Site demographics.
Procedures

The research process of this study was begun in January of 2012, but data collection and analysis occurred entirely within the fall semester of the 2013-2014 academic year.

Permission was granted by Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) to the researcher after this initial conversation and completing the Request to Research (Appendix A).

After obtaining informal permission to conduct research in the district, the researcher requested an official, written letter of permission on district letterhead (see Appendix B.)

This was done to meet requirements for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application process. Once the district had mailed a hard copy of the permission letter to the researcher, the application for IRB approval at California State University, Long Beach was submitted (August, 2013.)

Due to the researcher not interviewing teachers or students, at-risk populations, or performing a high-risk study, the IRB review was an expedited review. After obtaining IRB approval in November, 2013, in addition to permission from the school district to contact potential participants, the researcher began to invite counselors to participate in the study through an initial counselors meeting to gain approval to contact the proposed participants via email (Appendix C). All counselors invited to participate in the study agreed to be interviewed.
Data Collection

Once affirmative contact was made with each counselor, the next step was to schedule the interviews. All interviews were scheduled to occur on the school site during the school day. The researcher informed the participants that interviews would last approximately 1 hour, and will be audio-recorded with the consent of the participants.

Instructions to the participant then followed in order to begin the data collection process. The researcher sent an e-mail to the participants containing consent forms. The sheet was collected at the time of the interview along with the informed consent form for LBUSD (Appendix D).

The informed consent document stated the purpose of the research and described all procedures to the participant (Appendix E). Participants were informed that they need to participate in an hour-long interview that would be audio recorded with their consent. The consent form also stated benefits, incentives, possible risks to participating in the study, and measures that the researcher will take to mitigate those risks. Participants were given a written thank-you note and a $5 gift card to Starbucks at the conclusion of the study. In addition, participants were told that the data will remain confidential, could only be used with their permission, and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Interviews occurred in December and took place on the school site during the school day. Interviews lasted approximately one hour, and were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants (Appendix F). The protocol was a semi structured interview protocol, also known as an interview schedule (Appendix G).
Rationale for the Use of Interviews

There are several reasons for choosing interviews as the data collection method. Due to the nature of the topic under question, observations and document analysis were not readily accessible. Creswell (2009) believes that researchers must listen to participants and build understanding based on what is being communicated. It is difficult to observe counselors’ perception of roles; interviews fit the needs of this study.

Design/Defense of Method

This study was a qualitative study utilizing interviews, this is appropriate for this study as Merriam (1998) defines qualitative research as, “an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption to the natural setting as possible.” (Merriam, 1998, p. 5) Patton agrees, “In-depth, open ended interviewing is aimed at capturing interviews’ experiences with and perspectives on the program being evaluated…interview participants expressing their program experiences and judgments in their own terms…The evaluator must find out about those terms rather than impose upon them a preconceived or outsider’s scheme of what they are about. It is the interviewer’s task to find out what is fundamental or central to the people being interviewed, to capture their stories, and their world views.” (Patton, 2002, p. 7) Within qualitative studies, Patton goes on to identify three types of qualitative data that includes interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews are open-ended questions about people’s experiences, perceptions, feelings, and knowledge (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the research questions for this study were best studied through qualitative methods such as an interview. Patton goes on to define various interview strategies for collecting data in qualitative studies.
They are interview guides and standardized open-ended interviews. Interview guides outlines that are open ended, which allows the researcher to explore topics more in depth and probe for further information. The standardized, open-ended interview format consists of pre-determined questions in a standardized format. The researcher asks the same sequence of questions to each participant. This strategy is appropriate in interviewing school counselors regarding their role in a Linked Learning environment. Both strategies were combined in this study in the protocol has both standardized items, but they left room for probing by the researcher.

This dual implementation strategy, allows counselors to freely express themselves while be given structure to their responses. In launching a study of counselors’ roles in Linked Learning, it is already apparent that the concept of counselor roles in this environment is not studied widely from counselors’ viewpoints. Without counselors’ voices regarding their roles in a Linked Learning environment, it is difficult to study all aspects of the roles on campus in relation to one another.

**Instruments Used**

The researcher developed a semi-structured interview protocol, also known as an interview schedule. The semi-structured nature of the interview allows the participants the ability to freely answer questions and speak at length regarding their roles, while allowing the researcher a way of structuring and redirecting the interview when necessary.

In order to mitigate the issues of developing an instrument for use that may not yield enough, or the wrong type of data, the instrument was reviewed with expert input from a member of the researcher’s dissertation committee who is well versed in Linked
Learning, as well as another member of the Linked Learning fellowship to serve as content experts. Additionally, a pilot-test of the protocol was conducted with a school counselor. The interview was edited due to time constraints of potential participants. Afterwards the instrument was refined and pilot-tested a second time with another counselor. These individuals were not included in the study.

**Data Analysis**

“Data analysis is a systemic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern finding…Researchers always engage their own intellectual capacities to make sense of qualitative data.” (Hatch, 2002, p. 148) For this study, data collection was ongoing, and occurred in two stages. First, raw data from interviews was transcribed. Each transcript was read separately and analyzed. Topics that were reoccurring were noted for possible inclusion as codes leading to themes. When the researcher had amassed a collection of thick, rich descriptions and responses, as well as significant statements, they were highlighted for inclusion in codes. The highlighting process was conducted using a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) program, NVivo. This program served useful for assisting in the coding of data, disaggregating it into manageable components, and in identifying and naming the segments. “I advocate that qualitative codes are essence-capturing and essential elements of the research study that, when clustered
together according to similarity and regularity—a pattern—they actively facilitate the development of categories, and this analysis of their connections.” (Saldana, 2009, p. 8)

Following this sage advice, the researcher compared the codes to one another, and collapsed them together based on their relationships. If the code was persistent, it was kept in the codebook. If a code only appeared on one transcript, it was eliminated for the formal process, but kept in case there is a discussion of outliers.

The second stage of data collection occurred after the initial interview. Participants were shown their transcripts of their interviews, and given the opportunity to clarify, correct, or eliminate what was said.

After the interview, the researcher submitted the recording for transcription; Transcripts were returned to the researcher in a digital format as Word documents. The transcripts were then analyzed and coded, both individually and together, to search for emerging themes and commonalities.

Protection of Participants

Potential risks to the participants in this study possibly included discomfort with the subject matter, confidentiality concerns, and the worry that responses could be traced back to participants. The researcher mitigated risks in several ways. First, the researcher allowed participants the option to not answer any interview questions during the interview that made them feel uncomfortable. Next, the researcher allowed participants an opportunity to review interview transcripts during the follow up email in order to address any concerns the participants had about misrepresentation or misinterpretation of data. This member-checking was employed as both a quality-assurance measure and a participant-protecting measure.
Next, confidentiality concerns were addressed by giving participants pseudonyms. The researcher was careful to protect the identities of the participants. Colleague and committee input about the description also mitigated any occasions when the researcher may have written any description that might reveal the identity of the site or counselor.

Last of all, participants’ raw data was protected as well in order to keep their responses from being traced back to them. Consent forms, raw data, and transcripts for the same participant were not stored together. They were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home, but were organized by type, not by participant. This process made it so it will not be possible to tell whose consent form goes with whose transcript.

**Trustworthiness and Credibility**

Trustworthiness is also a concern in a study centered on self-reported data. As interviews alone are the data for gathering counselors’ input on their roles, it is important to allow the participants some time to examine the transcripts and see their thoughts in typed form. The participants own their responses, and if they feel they are being misrepresented, it is important for the researcher to know that, and give participants the opportunity to restate, clarify, or eliminate what was said in the transcript. The researcher made these attempts to utilize a strategy call “member checking.” (Merriam, 1998) (Creswell, 2009) to increase the trustworthiness of findings. Lincoln and Guba posit that this is the most critical technique for establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Following this advice, as a part of member-checking and data collection, the researcher asked those interviewed to review their transcripts for accuracy of how well their perceptions were represented. This member-checking served as a form of data collection as well, as it allowed the participant to examine his or her own perceptions and
determine whether those were represented accurately. If any problems of misinterpretation or misrepresentation occurred, the participant was offered the opportunity to correct them. There were no such incidences.

**Researcher Positionality**

The researcher is currently in her 5\textsuperscript{th} year of holding a full-time position as a high school counselor in the district studied, at one of the school sites studied. The researcher holds the same position as the participants, working as a high school counselor in a Linked Learning environment. The researcher speculates that this position will affect the data collection in a positive way as about half of the participants already know and feel comfortable speaking with the researcher. In terms of data analysis, the researcher speculates that the position will be of benefit in that the researcher is already familiar with commonly used terminology and acronyms they would potentially be used by the participants making it less difficult for the participant to communicate authentic perceptions.

The researcher does not hold any position of formal or informal authority on her home campus or within the school district or general community, so the researcher is not in any position to influence data by promising grant money, funding, job advancement, favors, penalties, intimidation, or incentives.

Additionally, the researcher is also a Linked Learning Fellow who received two stipends from the James Irvine Foundation to research the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment.
Conclusion

This chapter discussed the evolutionary research process that comprised this study. Characteristics of each site and general traits of counselors were discussed in the sections about site and sample. Following that, the general procedures of the research were illustrated, and data collections methods were given with reference to current methodological scholarship. The nature of the research instrument and its creation were outlined. In addition, the research method and design were discussed, as were the procedures for data analysis. Protection of participants, validity, reliability, credibility, trustworthiness, and positionality were also outlined. In the upcoming Chapter 4, data analysis will be discussed in detail.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Linked Learning is a high school reform initiative that seeks to successfully prepare California students for postsecondary education and careers by engaging students in linking strong academics with demanding technical learning and thereby strengthening their real-world experience in a wide range of fields. As high schools begin implementing Linked Learning, it will be important that the role of counselor be articulated to enhance student support in realizing the promise of Linked Learning.

In order to explore counselors’ perceptions of their roles, it was important to ask them to define their role in Linked Learning, and explain how it is fostered on campus. This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do counselors hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all students?

2. How do high school counselors work with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support?

3. To what extent do counselors know pathway students and are they familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway program?

4. How do counselors guide decisions about postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits?
In brief, this study was conducted through interviews in order to gain insight into the roles of twelve high school counselors with similar experience at serving in their current Linked Learning environments. After examination of the transcripts by participants, information gathered was then read, analyzed and coded using Nvivo software. This chapter presents findings relative to the four research questions that were derived from the Linked Learning Certification Guide (Connect Ed Team [Connect ED], 2011). In addition, coding of the data revealed 4 emerging themes that transcend the four research questions and are presented in this chapter.

Finding by Research Question #1: Expectations and Support

The first research question relative to the counselors role in a Linked Learning environment was, “How do counselors hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all students?” Throughout the interviews, a number of themes for expectations and support emerged including that of the counselor’s role of advocate, utilizing the delivery system of School Guidance Curriculum, and advocacy skills.

Expectations

Counselors reported similar expectations for all students. Counselors addressed expectations in all three American School Counselor Association domains of academic, college/career, and personal/social.

One counselor expounded, “My expectations for the students would be for them to first of all graduate from high school and do the very best that they can, so that they can have the choices to do what they really want to do instead of what they have to settle for when they graduate. I look for them to be successful in school which includes a lot of
things. It includes their personal and social growth. It includes their academics. I try to look at all of those things to make them productive citizens. Not just use the jargon either, but I do mean that, and to be happy and fulfilled, and also earn a living.”

Another professional school counselor confirmed, “My expectation for all students is that they are going to be- number one-graduate, number two- prepared to go wherever their choice is in terms of post-graduation. I always press the kids that you want to be prepared for the highest possible thing that you are looking at because then you are prepared for everything. That’s just what I expect of all students.”

The theme of expectations being for all students, not just for some sub groups was prevalent throughout the interviews. This supports the Linked Learning notion of high expectations for all students, regardless of their prior academic achievement.

**Role as Advocate**

In order to hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all of their pathway students, counselors reported serving as an advocate for them. To actively support students, one counselor noted, “I do what is needed to try to advocate for the kids because if I don’t, a lot of times there’s nobody else to do it…I am going to fight for my kids!”

One part of advocating for their pathway students is working closely with administrators. A counselor reported, “My administrator and I work well because she is very by the book, but if I come to her with a case that I think needs to break the rules, she’ll break them.”

Counselors not only advocate for their students with administrators, but with teachers as well. One experienced counselor summarized her role as advocate when she
stated, “When they are failing, I go to each teacher. I email teachers. I will try to explain the situation to see if there’s anything that can be done. We try to come up with creative ways to help students. Also, if there is a personal or social need that we can’t do here, we advocate trying to get them the assistance they need. Sometimes they qualify for our school based mental health, but sometimes they don’t, so you have to advocate for other things. I also advocate for the needs of the program. We meet with the administrators to try to figure out what works best for students. Like this is not working in this program, why don’t we try this?”

Counselors serve as advocates with their administrators, teachers, and within their pathway programs to hold all students to their highest level of achievement, by providing direct school services to ensure rigorous preparation for all students.

School Guidance Curriculum

In order to advocate for students ensuring a culture of high expectations, professional school counselors provide classroom guidance lessons. Many counselors shared their efforts in providing Classroom Guidance lessons, “I would make sure they have a plan. To make sure they are high school graduates, that they have been given every opportunity in terms of taking the higher level classes, every opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, some of the clubs that we have on campus, and try to push them as best we can to have a plan for the future. I love to see that every senior has a plan because the line was, you all know somebody that graduated and didn’t have a plan and still are not doing anything. Everybody nods because they all know somebody. That’s what we try to avoid.”
Overall counselors enjoy the opportunity to do classroom guidance lessons. One counselor noted, “It’s kind of nice to go to their world. When a kid comes here, they become guarded usually. There you are there on their turf so to speak, and you get a little different response out of them. Usually they are more open. Some kids come in here and they go on guard just because the structure of the office.”

One pathway counselor summarized her approach to classroom guidance as, “I go into the classrooms a lot; a lot more than I used to because we are all located in the same spot (contiguous space), which helps. Whenever a different opportunity comes up, rather it be field trips or school representatives on campus or just something comes up to my knowledge that I want to share with the kids, the teachers are very good at letting me walk in, give the information, when I want, for how long I want, so I have a lot of access to the kids and I think that’s helped us create a good family relationship, very trusting. They know when I come in it’s to give good information about things that they really need to be paying attention to. If I look up their grade in that section and all those kids are doing poorly I can come in. They will let me do a pep talk. They are great. So I’m definitely in the classroom a lot, which is good. It’s a different role instead of them just seeing me in to my office you know, so I like that.”

One counselor explained what her site does for ninth grade classroom guidance to assist pathway students academically.

“We went to the entire ninth grade Science classes. We did a mini presentation. We mostly showed them our counseling website. We gave each of them a four year plan... We talked to them about graduation and A-G requirements… We started talking
about careers… We even told them that they can start doing ACT questions every day…
And we had two volunteers put on graduation gowns…”

Pathway counselors provide classroom guidance lessons that consist of structured developmental lessons to assist students in achieving competencies. These lessons are presented systematically to assist counselors in holding a culture of high expectations and support for all of their students in their pathway.

Advocacy Skills

High School counselors use their advocacy skills to advocate for student’s placement and for rigorous preparation for all students in their pathway programs. Counselors noted skills working with teachers in the classroom setting, as well as outside of the classroom setting.

One pathway counselor asserted, “I advocate in regards to inside their classrooms with practicing with the student about how to communicate with their teachers more effectively.” An additional pathway counselor agreed when she added, “A lot of times, the hardest one is sometimes talking to teachers about a student and trying to be an advocate for the student. We all make first impressions and teachers are no exception to that, having impressions of students. Sometimes it takes a while to get a teacher to give a student a second chance. That’s kind of been one of the things I am up against.”

Pathway counselors use advocacy skills to assist students outside of the classroom as well. One pathway counselor noted that he works to actively identify under represented students, and support them in their efforts to achieve at their highest academic levels.
“We started the African-American lecture series in April, bringing a surgeon from UCLA out and the vice president of Toyota, and invited students to come out and hear them speak for a period, and that was pretty successful, and it was opened to all students, not just African-American students. Students in other Small Learning Communities were able to attend as well. There’s definitely a need for that, especially among the African American community because students are really struggling. Just trying to create a positive environment and let them know that they can excel and hear stories of others and let it inspire them, and motivate them.”

Pathway counselors use their advocacy skills with teachers in the classrooms as well as working with marginalized students to provide equity and access to hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all pathway students. Additional areas of usage of advocacy skills included assisting students to apply for scholarships, financial aid, and completing college applications; writing letters of recommendation for colleges, scholarships, and employment; advocating for their pathway and students during master scheduling; scheduling of students into preferred teachers’ classes; and planning and organizing student recognition and honor roll events.

The counselor’s role in a Linked Learning environment is to hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all students by providing direct school services through their role as advocate, presenting school guidance curriculum lessons, and using their advocacy skills to meet pathway student needs.
Findings by Research Question #2: Identification and Intervention

The research question guiding this section was, “How do high school counselors work with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support?” Participants shared many ways that they as pathway counselors identify students in need, and intervene for students in multiple ways including serving as collaborator, providing responsive services, and teaming/collaborating.

Role as Collaborator

Pathway participants reflected on their role as Collaborator as they addressed how they work with other individuals and organizations. By collaborating and consulting, counselors in a Linked Learning environment work with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students in need of additional support. Pathway counselors weighed in on their role as collaborator most frequently with teachers followed by parents. In terms of the importance of working together, a counselor exclaimed, “Without everyone, there’s no way we could do it!”

Counselor/Teacher Collaboration

Pathway counselors consistently reported that forming collaborative partnerships with teachers was crucial in supporting students in the Linked Learning environment. “In terms of collaboration with teachers, we have a good partnership, and they understand what we do, I know when we first started working, that wasn’t the issue, they’re not used to us, and they think we don’t do anything. But now they understand our work and we work closely with them…, our teachers highly respect what we do, so we don’t have an issue...”
Technology has enabled more collaboration and consultation between pathway counselors and teachers. “Teachers will cc me on an email, usually because of maybe behavior, maybe academics, and so I make it a point to follow up with that student, you know not necessarily that day but probably within the next 24 to 48 hours, and that way the student will hear it from me, another adult, not only the teacher.”

Counselor/Parent Collaboration

Counselor/Parent collaboration was a key topic, “We really want a parent to come in and see what we are doing and be familiar not only with the high school graduation requirements, the A-G requirements, as well and see what their options are after high school. So when our student gets to their senior year, they will have another person they can turn to because they know the information as well.”

Pathway counselors act as collaborators with stakeholders. Counselors exhorted upon the ways in which they utilize their leadership skills to assist students in individual student planning especially teachers and parents, to identify and intervene on behalf of pathway students in need of additional support.

Counselor/Community Services Collaboration

Counselors work with the pathway community to identify additional support for students by providing responsive services. These are activities that meet an immediate need for consultation or referral.

One pathway counselor touted, “We make use of emergency services when we are not sure or even have inkling that there’s a possibility of a student that may want to hurt themselves or others. We utilize the police, PET (Psychiatric Emergency Team), mental health agencies, hospitals, parents, and even relatives just to try to get everybody
together. We do respond to potential problems or problems that we see. I think we do a good job at that.”

Pathway counselors noted that there has been an increased need to provide responsive services. One counselor shared “It almost seems like almost on a weekly basis we are calling PET, to come here. We are constantly providing that service. They are on our speed dial now. Every year, it seems like we are getting more depressed students and more students with anxiety and stuff like that.” One pathway counselor alone reported making the call to the Psychiatric Emergency Team to hospitalize seventeen students by the time this school year was only half completed.

One pathway counselor detailed how she provides responsive services.

Kids will come to us first as a general rule. The kids that come in just because they have something small going on up to the ones that are really an ongoing thing, that they have talked to me multiple times, but they just need somebody to talk to about it. It’s like they don’t need somebody to solve it for them because they kind of got that going. They have other support, but they just sometimes at school need to have a person that they know will listen to them here at school. A lot of self-referral for that kind of thing. Teachers will shoot an email that says, ‘hey, so and so is in crisis right now. I don’t know for sure what’s going on. Do you have a minute to see them?’ Then the teachers will have the kids come down and see us, which is really good because that’s a good way to catch up.

Pathway counselors have had to become proactive with collaborating and consulting with teachers regarding addressing students’ personal/social/emotional issues. Following a suicide at the school, a professional development for teachers was created and led by counselors “When we were having a lot of students with depression, suicidal tendencies, or whatever, each of us did a little presentation at our Small Learning Community meeting to talk about what to do with this, and how important it is.”

Pathway counselors provide responsive services to identify students in need, and intervene for students who are need of additional support.
Teaming and Collaboration Skills

Pathway counselors utilize their skills in teaming and collaboration to consult with other helping agents to identify and intervene for pathway students who are in need of additional support. Exceeded only by comments regarding collaborating with teachers and parents, the school psychologist was most frequently mentioned as a key collaborative partner followed by their counseling colleagues, and then outside services such as therapists, and Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

Counselor/Mental Health Worker Collaboration

“You meet with your students and talk with them, but when it looks like there needs to be more ongoing dialogue, you make a referral. Sometimes when students are not able to access mental health services or counseling services, I would meet with them more regularly myself, or we work in conjunction with our school psychologist who is excellent. She has interns that we make use of as well. We try to make it work in whatever way we can. If this person can’t see the student, then we will see them. If this counselor can’t, another counselor will step in because we are like family here.”

The adage, “It takes a village to raise a child,” was a common theme prevalent throughout the interviews. One counselor emphasized this point by stating, “There’s collaboration with all the outside agencies that the students may be getting services from already. For instance, if they are in foster care, or if they are on probation. We just need to collaborate with community resources…you are constantly pulling people in to give you information and to provide information for that student so that you are not trying to do it alone and you have input.”
Counselor/Pathway Community Collaboration

Additional teaming and collaboration skills noted were collaborating and consulting with on-site mental health services, career center directors, colleges, and programs such as Educational Talent Search (ETS), Upward Bound, and student mentor programs such as Power for Youth, AmeriCorps, and so forth. Additionally, working with tutoring and after school programs such as Boys and Girls Club and on-site after school programs; cafeteria workers and custodians mentoring and providing job training for students; credit recovery programs on and off campus such as adult school, continuation school, and alternate educational settings; working with social workers to meet the needs of students who are abused, neglected, homeless, have deported or incarcerated parents; Working with the nurse especially for pregnant students. Collaborating with universities for counseling interns; with clerks and record keepers, as well as district personnel; Consulting with the community worker for translation, interpretation, and home visits. Collaborating with the parent center facilitator, Student Attendance Review Board (SARB), attending numerous Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meetings, 504 Plan meetings, and Student Study Team meetings, and working with agencies that provide services to AB 540 students and their families.

Providing indirect student services by collaborating with stakeholders, counselors in a Linked Learning environment use their skills in teaming with other helping agents to identify and intervene for pathway students who are in need of additional support. As noted above, this includes an exhaustive and elaborate network of support providers.
Findings by Research Question #3: Knowing Students and their Pathway Program

The research question guiding this section was, “To what extent do counselors know pathway students and are they familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway program?” Counselors know their pathway students in general, and are familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway program by acting as systems change agents, providing systems support, and utilizing counseling/coordination skills.

Role as Systems Change Agent

Counselors in a Linked Learning environment act as Systems Change agents to get to know their pathway students and become familiar with the unique characteristics of their pathway program.

One systems change agent noted, “I think that being a counselor we have a different outlook on things because we do social, academic, you know, career based things at our team meetings, our Small Learning Community meetings, even at the administrative level, saying this is what we need changed. I very much feel listened to and that those things are taken into consideration and things have changed. I definitely think we are valued and our voices are heard which is why our program is doing so well because everyone is listening to all the different stakeholders. It is just as important that I hear what the teacher is saying. Sometimes I might come up with an idea and the teachers might say, mmm, maybe we need to do that, but do it this way, and so I think we all add a different expertise, and it’s important to have all of us there at the table.”

A pathway counselor at another site saw his role differently, “you’re the first one they (teachers) come to for … They think that you’re in a leadership position and you
can make changes. It’s not necessarily true, but that’s how they see you.” Another counselor reflected, “Change is difficult. It goes really slowly.”

An additional pathway counselor noted systemic change that benefitted students who are marginalized by providing them equity and access to classes. “You have to know your numbers and data so there were a lot of misconceptions that came about when we started out doing this job. For the first 3-5 years it’s rough, because we wanted more of an open system and we wanted to change the whole system, the way we put students in Advanced Placement (AP), and Honors classes. Being mostly young to the school, the way we were taught or trained, we got back to putting students first. We are pretty good with computers, so we had data and research and made presentations, take it to the principal, get input, and then we have to present it to the staff. So I’m pretty happy being here and you can ask most counselors they are pretty happy and they enjoy their role and we’re glad that those tough years have gone and it’s a new set of values that we have and standards that we like, and we enjoy it.”

Another success story that was reported by a pathway counselor was, “What I actually suggested to the ninth grade team is just what I said, “let’s find some ten students who are struggling, but there’s a spark. Maybe they are doing well in this class, but not so well in this class. We can try to figure out, oh that works for that student or this one has an interest but maybe they need some tutoring or a little hand holding kind of thing, so that we get results and build a more positive atmosphere in the teachers and experience some success in the interventions that they use.”

Pathway counselors serve as agents of change when dealing with students academically, but also for personal reasons as well. Counselors need to be proactive, and
keep a pulse on their pathway program students and program, and make changes when there is a need for reform to ensure that the whole student is being supported. One agent of change touted, “it’s hard to be proactive with emotional and social issues with students, although I did do something two years ago, and again last year. I worked with a team of students two years ago who were noticing that a lot students were expressing suicidal tendencies. We did have one student commit suicide four years ago. We helped create a brochure. We didn’t call it suicide-warning signs because we didn’t want to exclude …if people weren’t feeling suicidal, but maybe were experiencing anxiety or depressed in general. This was the idea that they could put this in their wallet...we went to all of the classrooms to deliver this message.”

Although counselors reported a range of responses to the prompt regarding serving as an agent of change, they overall reported that they do plan, develop, and implement changes that affect the entire pathway program. While some change is on a small scale, others on a school-wide basis, these transformations address a student’s academic, personal/social, and college/career needs. These changes affect the pathway students and program as they get to know the needs of the program and students they serve, and act as agents of change to meet their pathway’s needs.

Counselors get to know their pathway students and become familiar with the unique characteristics of their program by acting in the role of Systems Change Agent. The evidence demonstrates through counselor responses that involvement in course selection to improve equity and access, being pro-active in designing appropriate materials, and being perceived by faculty as part of the school leadership team are all contributing factors for pathway counselors to impact the Linked Learning environment.
Systems Support

Pathway counselors support the system by managing the counseling program and engaging in activities that maintain and enhance services. Pathway counselors work closely with their colleagues to support one another and the program as a whole.

One seasoned professional noted, “We work really well as a department. If we see a process that really needs to be changed, everybody chips in and says, ‘Okay, how about this?’ and so we really work very well together in that respect to make things work more smoothly for everybody.”

Another pathway counselor at the same site agreed by weighing in, “We are really there for each other. I think we have good unity. We have all common values and we really want to do what’s best for the students.”

Yet another pathway counselor at the same site emphasized, “We are not in competition with each other, so we work as a team, we are more like an operating machine, so we share information and we share best practices.”

Counselors in a Linked Learning environment utilize teamwork to support the whole counseling system. They also enhance their programs by using best practices and strategies such as incorporating technology into their programs.

One of the ways pathway counselors improve the counseling program is by creating an online newsletter, as one counselor explains, “A grade level newsletter, a bulletin that we put out every month and it just has the news specifically for our grade. So we will send it to the English and History teachers. They will post it in their classroom. Some will read it; some will pass it around and then we post it on School Loop every month. So we try to get the information out to them, and it was a long
process because for a long time we found that nobody knew it existed and now the
students are starting to come back to us and go, ‘hey, I read it on the newsletter.’”

Technology is also used for organization of duties, and assessment when the
school is on modified schedules to allow for state testing. “It used to be everything was
all papers from the district and we organized it that way. Now we do everything through
excel and the teachers have the lists in advance, and we send a letter in advance. It’s
sorted by classroom numbers so the student and parent know what classroom the student
will be in for testing, and stuff like that. Technology has helped us greatly, and it’s the
way we work. I think we are all open to learning new things and sharing information.”
remarked one professional counselor.

Pathway counselors use technology not only for communication and organization,
but also for classroom guidance. “We have a different approach ……helping the
students to figure out their interests and values, so we make them take a career interest
survey every year, it’s online and free. So we print it out when we do a grad check with
them show them the results…We paint a different picture that you know life is going to
change but the career is a lifelong process, it’s not something you pick, it’s more than a
job, it’s going to affect you greatly. So before you decide on a job, you have to decide
who you are as a person first.”

Pathway counselors utilize collegial team-work and technology to support the
counseling systems a whole. They also utilize technology to communicate, organize, and
get to know their students and pathway program’s unique characteristics.
Counseling and Coordination Skills

Pathway counselors use counseling and collaboration skills to get to know their students and unique characteristics of their Linked Learning pathway program. These skills are utilized to enhance the student experience, and promote equity and access.

One pathway counselor proudly noted:

“I think I am not going to say this as me, but counselors as a whole, I think we are a big part of why we have many students taking AP classes. We changed the culture. This is an AP school now, whereas it was not when I first started…. Ten years ago, a lot of students had no idea what AP was. Now there’s definitely more access… It’s just a change of culture at this school… I think as counselors, I think we started it because we are the first ones that the first two years, we would really try to encourage especially under represented students to take Advanced Placement (AP)… we called it the “Got AP?” week… We coordinated with the AP teachers where the students could find out more about their AP class, sign-up, and we made posters… Then the following year, students were asking, “when is AP week going to be? Little by little, it’s changed.”

Other coordinated efforts by the counseling team led to systemic change in terms of higher-level math acquisition.

I always give a speech ……my job is to give you the best advice based on all of the students I have worked with, based on all the meetings I go to for college, universities, et cetera…. My job is to advise you. Your job is to make the decisions. There’s a culture now that students are expected to take math unless you have a strong reason not to. We have way more math teachers now than we did when I first started and way more upper level math.

Pathway counselors also use their counseling and coordination skills to get to know their pathway students by providing interventions for them.

I learned of an intervention, a student success program where I called in basically one student form every Small Learning Community last year who were getting D’s and F’s and thought I would work with them. It was kind of the end of the year so I did that, and a couple of students showed a lot of success. Actually the one that I had the most parent support on showed the most success, but then I turned around and I introduced that to my Small Learning Community (SLC), and some of them started to use that as a template, meeting with students.
Pathway counselors use their counseling and coordination skills to organize and participate on advisory boards, and work with business partners for internships crucial to Linked Learning. One active counselor explained.

We do have an advisory board, so we have members of the community that we meet with, I believe twice a semester, and we talk to them about what’s going on at our school and try to get them involved. I know that last year we actually had a conference on campus and kids that took part received training as far as resume writing, how to dress for an interview, and how to conduct an interview. So they received some skills, which was good. It was enlightening to see members of the community actually come out and be a role model as a business professional. We have that available and we’re looking into getting internships for our juniors. That is something in the works…we want people outside of campus, to make the community, feel as if they’re a part of the happenings at our school.

Pathway counselors use their counseling and coordination skills to get to know pathway students and the unique characteristics of their Linked Learning pathway by coordinating system wide change. Other ways in which counselors utilize their skills included reviewing data, monitoring grades, attendance, and transcripts, assessments, and working with alumni.

Findings by Research Questions #4: Guiding College and Career Decisions

The research question guiding this section was, in a Linked Learning environment, “How do counselors guide decisions about postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits?” Counselors guide student decisions about postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits by acting as leaders, utilizing Individual Student Planning, and implementing leadership skills.

Role as Leader

Pathway counselors act in the role of leader to guide decisions about postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits. In terms of acting in the role of leader at the site level, one professional school counselor pondered, “I think I lead a lot in
this school, and I think I am a leader. I don’t have any titles. For a lot of reasons, a lot of people come to me, so I do think I have leadership roles…I would probably say I have some leadership in this or that, but nothing that I am the leader of.”

Another pathway counselor explained, “It’s hard because I don’t want to be in charge of a Small Learning Community, and because my time should be with my students, and that’s why I chose to be a counselor, I really don’t want to be an administrator.”

A counselor of a pathway program that has received national recognition felt very differently.

“I’m definitely one of the leaders of my Small Learning Community, and have a big part in what happens, what the major decisions are made in the program. I’m definitely blessed to be seen as a leader… giving guidance in regard to where the program is going, and what we need to change, and so on. I definitely have a leadership role. I’m definitely one of the leaders… you need someone from outside of the classroom to bring it all together, and that has expertise in all the different little areas that we do.”

In contrast, one pathway counselor added, “You know, we have so many good people here that I am kind of in a nice position where I don’t have to lead too much. The only thing primarily that I can think of off the top of my head is test coordinator.”

Pathway counselors expressed a variety of responses to the prompt regarding the role of leader as evidenced by the previous quotes.

Respondents offered little when asked about their role as leader in a Linked Learning environment, often being articulated by counselors who are comfortable being in leadership role. However, in terms of leading students through their postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits, pathway counselors agreed that they lead and guide student’s decision-making processes with individual student planning.
Individual Student Planning

Pathway counselors guide decisions about postsecondary options engaging in individual student planning, assisting students in establishing personal goals, and developing future plans.

One pathway counselor noted his strategy for individual student planning as, “We look at their transcripts and figure out what’s going on, and try to decipher what’s their plan, what’s their academic goal. There’s always room for improvement so try to create a plan that will help the student be successful whether it be talking to a teacher, get some tutoring, or just trying to find ways to improve oneself and meet academic goals, be eligible to meet A-G requirements, so just being supportive. Or trying to figure out a plan for a student who is severely credit deficient; what classes they should tackle first at independent study, or who to go for help…We sit down and talk about careers. I’ll ask them what they’re interested in doing, what might they major in... At times, I will try to encourage and push a student that I feel have the potential to go the college route. Whatever a student feels they’ve been called to do, I try to encourage them to go ahead and seek that. Yeah, I’ve seen success.”

Guiding pathway students to utilize technology and the career center is another strategy that counselors use with students. “Sometimes we’ll sit and research careers on the computer or we also have a career center where they can go and there is just a lot of information there.”

Pathway counselors noted seeing all of the students on their caseloads individually at least once a year. “As far as how we set plans, we meet with each student in the school individually. The first semester, we are meeting with the seniors. Then we
meet with the juniors and sophomores, and ninth graders by the end of the year, so we have talked with each one of them individually. We have been able to set some type of plan in place for them.”

A pathway counselor at another site explained their process for individual student planning. “We start in their freshman year when we meet with them one-on-one. We will say, ‘ok, what is your plan?’ Right now, what do you think you want to do when you graduate from high school? Then we start talking about what they have to take in the next years. That conversation happens every year that we are meeting with the students to talk about classes. You told me last year that you want to go to college...Let’s look at your transcript. …So the conversation happens every time we sit down with the kids and talk to them about where they are at, is this still their plan?.”

Pathway counselors guide decisions about postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits by providing individual student planning at least once a year, and assisting them in accessing resources.

**Leadership Skills**

Pathway counselors reported utilizing leadership skills to help guide students decisions about post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits. The Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) illustrates leadership skills as those activities that promote, plan, and implement career and college readiness, course selection and placement, and decision-making activities. (NCTSC, 2009) Counselors in this study concur that they utilize their leadership skills to help guide students decisions about postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits.
One pathway counselor spoke of being proactive when the student is not being successful in their pursuits. “Calling students in at the quarter, the first and third quarter specifically to kind of go over their grades and see if they have a study plan. So we call in the D and F students to see if they have a strategy to raise their grades. Okay you’re in this hole, how are we going to get out, and it’s encouraging because now when they are in 11th grade, they have a plan and they know what they need to do. But in 9th grade you literally have to guide them, okay here’s the tutoring schedule, let’s go talk to your teacher. You want me to send an email and facilitate that and as they get older they gain more independence in doing that.”

One pathway counselor detailed her routine, “When we meet with them in the fall visits we have handouts of the four year plan that includes the diploma requirements and also the A-G requirements that we recommend they should do for each respective year. Our counseling website has the same information...We try to encourage them to do an interest inventory...When we meet we have a card, not a programming card, it’s a card where from here to here we’ll write down what their interests were in 9th grade, 10th grade, 11th grade. Sometimes they change sometimes it’s the same, so that kind of guides our conversations with kids. So this card it’s like gold to us cause if we lost it, then it’s kind of hard to remember every single student’s interest from year to year, so that’s like our guide.”

Pathway counselors use their leadership skills to help guide student’s decisions about post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits.

High School counselors in a Linked Learning environment utilize direct student services to guide decisions about postsecondary education, training and career pursuits by
serving as a leader, providing individual student planning, and utilizing their leadership skills to meet pathway student’s needs in spite of high case load numbers.

**Emerging Themes:**

Data analysis identified four emerging themes that were linked throughout all of the research questions. They were similar across both school sites included in this study that directly contributed to school counselors successfully implementing the Linked Learning certification standards. In the interviews, participants shared their perceptions of the ASCA national standards, Linked Learning, Non-counseling related duties, and caseload sizes. This provides important context for each participant in their current lived experience as high school counselors, and the subject of this study. These elements strongly influenced the participants and their responses through the interviews. This section briefly reviews these common threads, and provides connections of the findings to research questions.

**Emerging Theme #1: ASCA National Standards**

Pathway counselors weighed in on how they implement their counseling program in terms of the American School Counselor (ASCA) National Standards. This was most evident when addressing their role as advocate and how they hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all students. This standard has a strong basis in the ASCA standards as well. When it comes to knowledge and implementation of the ASCA national standards, the range of responses was extreme from, “We just laugh at them I’m sure because there is no way, we are so far away from them, let’s just put it that way. I think I have them here somewhere.” To, “Most of us graduated from Cal State Long Beach, and that’s a push in our school, so we arrange the
whole thing, presentations, what we need to do, what’s best for our students and what we feel we need to align to those three standards. We set up our website that way, we set our counseling that way…so by aligning to those three standards, it puts students first, and that’s how we like it. I don’t think it’s going to change in the future because we are going to stand where we come from. There has been a lot of frustration over the first couple of years we were here, and they think we are lazy and didn’t want to do anything, but we align with the three standards, and it makes our job more efficient.”

Participants expressed a wide range of responses in terms of their knowledge and implementation of the ASCA National Model Standards.

Emerging Theme #2- Linked Learning

Pathway counselors noted a wide range of familiarity with Linked Learning, and their experiences with relevant Professional Development. This was most prevalent when addressing the role of collaborator, and how counselors work with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students in need of additional support. Two of the twelve pathway counselors had attended a one-day professional development with pathway members to create Student Outcome Charts. One of those counselors knew that there were standards as they pertain to counselors. One who attended the training explained Lined Learning as, “it helps students understand why they’re learning what they are learning, and how it links to the career of their choice…and how that applies to the outside world of what they’re going to be doing so they can apply what they’re learning to something that is real to them.”
One pathway counselor surmised, “it’s kind of taking classes that are relative to the path that you want to eventually, you know, the occupation you want to reach I guess.”

A participant reflected, “We probably haven’t had the training that we probably should have for this. I don’t think I really know an answer, but I think we should all have an answer. Do you know what I mean? This is like one of those catch phrases that have been out there.”

A veteran counselor pondered “My only concern though is that the kids are so young and they go through all of this and they are on this career path, and maybe they might want to jump onto another career, maybe this wasn’t right for me. Maybe I wasn’t good at it, but I chose it. I have those questions.”

Other participants were not up even for a guess when asked, “What is Linked Learning?” “I have heard them talk about it, but not like specific direction on what it is.”

Other participants relayed what they had heard from other staff members about Linked Learning. “One of the things that the Small Learning Community (SLC) lead teachers mentioned that there’s so much that’s put on them now with the Linked Learning and all the in-services that go along with that and the training for this and we have to come up with a template for that and those things, that students that are sort of getting pushed aside (so to speak), and the time to actually intervene is less and less now.”

Another colleague emphasized “A lot of paperwork, paperwork, and accountability on teachers and students. We usually try to get students to be accountable and parents too, but I just know they had like so much paperwork to do. For me, there
were three sections that I took care of. I know the numbers! Basically on guidance and counseling, college and career planning.”

Counselors in a Linked Learning environment vary greatly on their knowledge and professional development experience with Linked Learning. This knowledge variance makes it difficult for counselors to collaborate, team, consult, and coordinate with pathway community members as they do not share the same knowledge base (vocabulary, etc.), mission, or purpose due to the lack of professional development on Linked Learning.

**Emerging Theme #3 - Counseling Duties**

Pathway counselors noted numerous and various duties as a part of their job description as they relate to coordination and systems support. This was clear as counselors recounted how they attempt to serve as agents of systemic change and get to know their pathway students and program... Some of the additional duties mentioned included discipline, serving on duty, substituting, and acting as quasi-administrators, scheduling, organizing, and implementing assessments. These duties were frequently included in the interviews. Tests such as the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), Advanced Placement (AP) testing, Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR), California Alternate Placement Assessment (CAPA) and California Modified Assessment (CMA), SAT, ACT and PSAT were a few of the assessments mentioned. It should be noted that at one site, counselors were assigned by their Small Learning Community pathway program, to students of all grade levels. The other site assigns counselors by grade level, and last name alphabet letter, and they serve as a liaison to an SLC (Pathway Program).
One pathway counselor responsible for testing coordination shared, “It’s hard because as you’re seeing with fewer counselors you get fewer opportunities so like for example I’m the test coordinator…so that takes away from time that I can meet with students and work on grades, and catch up with them…The testing part inhibits us from being able to meet with students as much as we need to…So those other demands take away.”

Emerging Theme #4- Caseload Size

Pathway counselors weighed in heavily on their caseload size, and found it to be a challenge. This topic permeated the interviews, especially in terms of acting in the role of leader, and guiding student decisions about post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits. The ASCA recommends a counselor to student ratio of 1:250. A range of 475 to 622 was reported resulting in pathway counselors expressing their concerns over “face time” with their students.

One pathway counselor lamented, “Some of them I know more than others because there is only one of me, and there are many of them so I wish my case load was a little smaller so that I would be more involved with the students. I do the best I can with what I have.”

Another pathway counselor agreed when she surmised, “I wish I had more time. I think there’s definitely more room for that. If I had more time I could get to know them better, and the better we know them, the better we can serve them.”

A pathway counselor added, “It’s not always easy just for the counselor to be the one person trying to help 500 kids. Unless they come to my office a lot, I don’t get to know them that well… It works better as a team.”
Another professional school counselor said, “In terms of individual students, I wish I had more contact with them so that I can be sort of like an agent of change for them as well. Maybe with time it will happen, but for now it’s just keeping up.”

A seasoned counselor added, “With case loads of 550 and higher, which is what we have had for the 11 years that I’ve been here, if we had all grade levels, your time is focused primarily on the seniors, so it’s hard to do, it’s more reactive counseling.”

In spite of time constraints and higher than recommended case load sizes, pathway counselors continue to make strides in knowing their students personally, “You know, coming from a business background, your customers are the number one thing, and for me, my students are the number one thing. They know that my door is always open, if they need anything they’ll come by. That’s something that I see as strength in what I do is to get to know my students, and hopefully by junior year, I’ll know all their names.”

A female counselor stated

Well we have an open door policy so they know they’re welcome to come here especially before lunch, during lunch, after school, or nutrition. Then sometimes I have students who come here with a pass from a teacher, usually those are like actual counseling sessions I have with my students. And just trying to get to know them. I have about 500 of them so I don’t know all of their names but when I actually say their names, and they come to my door, they’re pretty impressed. As long as I do my part then I’m good because we can only do so much with about 500 plus on our caseload.

Some pathway counselors reported being better at memorizing student’s names than other counselors. One counselor beamed, “I think by sophomore year I will know all their names. Students that come to my door, for the most part, I know them. On occasion there might be one or two that I don’t really know so it’s just that face-to-face contact with them.”
One pathway counselor proudly stated,

I probably have 470 kids. I can tell you that I know the names of probably 90%-95% of them. That’s something I have been very blessed with, having a good memory for name and faces. There’s a group of students that I know really well. They come to me. They feel comfortable. They advocate for themselves…I think that’s one of the reasons why we do feel it is very important to do that one-on-one with the kids, so that they know who we are, and we know who they are.

Pathway counselors expressed concerns over caseload sizes in terms of them adversely affecting their ability to meet with students to complete individual student planning, and guide them in their decisions regarding post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits.

**Conclusion**

This chapter examined the findings of this study organized around the research questions, which graphically depicted the major themes and their orientation relative to the research questions. All participants reported their past experiences with fulfilling roles of advocate, collaborator, systems change agent, and leader. Furthermore, all participants shared examples of how they deliver services, and the skills they possess to fulfill their duties. Participants described how they directly and indirectly serve the school and students. Last of all, pathway counselors described their function in terms of the domains of Academic, Personal/Social, and College/Career standards. All of these findings served to form an impression of the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment.
CHAPTER 5
INTERPRETATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings and Interpretation

Due to the relatively new Linked learning reform initiative, it is not surprising that minimal attention has been given to defining the role of the high school counselor in a Linked Learning environment, and to investigate if policy and practice align with policy implementation.

Linked Learning serves all Long Beach Unified high school students who are enrolled in Small Learning Communities at the district’s high schools. Linked Learning is taking priority in the Long Beach Unified School District as high schools continue to strive for pathway certification. The goal is that all Long Beach Unified High Schools will eventually become wall-to-wall Linked Learning certified (LBUSD, 2013). The role counselors play in a Linked Learning environment is an important consideration for full implementation. For Linked Learning to move forward, counselors can provide meaningful contributions regarding the planning, implementing, and evaluating stages of this education reform initiative.

The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to explore the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment. The researcher’s aim was to invite more critical reflection by counselors as they discussed and examined their perceptions of their role as counselor in the context of Linked Learning.
Twelve counselors from two high schools in the Long Beach Unified School District were interviewed regarding their roles in a Linked Learning environment. These two schools, Millikan and Cabrillo High Schools, were chosen due to both being in the process of certification, or have already been Linked Learning certified in at least one pathway program. These schools exhibit high-functioning pathways, and are located within thirty minutes of each other by surface streets.

In brief, this study found that twelve high school counselors readily shared their perceptions of their role in a Linked Learning environment. In answer to the first research question, “How do counselors hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all students?” counselors noted their role as Advocate as they actively support policies and practices that promote and support students. Pathway counselors also placed an emphasis on the School Guidance Curriculum as their service delivery model that they utilized the most to reach all students in order to maintain a culture of high expectations and support. Pathway counselors discussed their advocacy skills as being crucial to keep expectations high, and supporting their students especially in terms of advocating for the student’s placement in appropriate classes.

In answer to the second question, “How do high school counselors work with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support?” Pathway counselors answered in terms of fulfilling the roles of collaborator and consultant, as they work with other stakeholders to identify and provide interventions for struggling students. Pathway counselors noted utilizing responsive services to meet the immediate needs of those in crisis. Teaming and collaboration skills were noteworthy
as counselors collaborate amongst school staff, and those that work outside of the school to assist students.

In answer to the third question, “To what extent do counselors know pathway students, and are they familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway program,” pathway counselors indicated serving in the role of Systems Change Agent. The delivery service model that allowed them to affect change was that of systems support. Counselors weighed in on their counseling and coordination skills that were effective in affecting change within their settings.

In answer to the fourth question, “How do counselors guide decisions about post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits?” Pathway counselors relied on their role as Leader as they guide students. Professional school counselors use Individual Student Planning to help students establish personal goals and plans. A counselor’s leadership skills are paramount in college and career readiness and decision making activities.

Major themes frequently related to each other across the research questions. For instance the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) service domains of Academic, Personal/Social, and College/Career standards permeated all of the responses with greater emphasis in some areas than others.

For example, in terms of the Academic domain, a heavy emphasis was placed on this area particularly as it pertained to question number one centered on expectations and support, pathway counselors highlighted advocacy that directly related to a student’s academic placement and performance. The Academic Domain was touched on by pathway counselors in response to almost all areas of inquiry.
In terms of the Personal/Social Domain, a heavy emphasis was placed on this area particularly as it pertained to question number two which focuses on intervening on behalf of students,” Pathway counselors reflected on collaboration and providing responsive services to those in need of having their personal/social/emotional needs met immediately. Yet, the Personal/Social domain permeated the conversation as other areas were addressed as well.

For the College/Career Domain, a major emphasis was placed on this area particularly as it related to question number four that calls for post high school guidance. Pathway counselors punctuated how they stress the college and career domain when guiding students in individual student planning. However, this theme was prevalent amongst many responses.

The question that included all themes (the ASCA Domains) was number three, “To what extent do counselors know pathway students, and are they familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway program?” Pathway counselors spoke of the Academic, Personal/Social, and College/Career Domains in terms of systemic change and support as well as in utilizing their counseling and coordination skills.

Research Questions and Linked Learning

The findings in this study had a considerable overlap with literature. The main themes common between the literature and the findings can be divided by how they address each research question. However, the literature did not focus as extensively on Linked Learning as the participants did. Participants did not speak in terms of frameworks or step-by-step processes, it was apparent that their perceptions aligned with the School Based Community Counseling Conceptual Framework (SBCCCF). Pathway
counselors have many roles, skills, and duties in their Linked Learning environment specifically and most notable in the areas of advocacy, collaboration, systemic change, and leadership.

The Evaluation of the California Linked Learning District Initiative Third-Year Report (Guha et al., 2012,) noted many findings that are corroborated in this study. The most impressive one supports counselors concerns over student to counselor ratios that are double the ASCA national standard norm (averaging 500:1 vs. the recommended 250:1.) The SRI International Center for Education Policy report prepared for the James Irvine Foundation concludes, “As districts consider how to support and sustain the Linked Learning approach, adequately funding counseling will need to be a priority.” (Guha et al., 2012, p. 48) Other areas noted that are supported by this study include limited counselor availability (counselors reported too high of case load numbers and non-counseling related duties such as coordinating assessments that interfere with their availability to students). Guha et.al goes on to state, “Counseling services are weak in a number of Linked Learning districts due to budget cuts and layoffs.” which frames excessive caseloads for counselors in this study. Further the report adds, “Counseling remains an area needing continued attention in the development of district pathway systems… especially in meeting needs of disadvantaged students” …(Guha et al., 2012, p. 43) which limits the Linked Learning process

This study brought to light an issue counselors have raised concern about over time. Central to this study is the revelation that Linked Learning is best served with reasonable expectations of counselor availability. Guha voices this concurrent concern “This means that many students, especially in lower grades, receive limited counseling
support. As districts consider how to support and sustain the Linked Learning approach, adequately funding counseling will need to be a priority. To realize the student support component of the Linked Learning Initiative.” (Guha et al., 2012, p. 48) Underclassmen typically have received information about post-secondary options from their pathway teachers, not counselors. This has led to less developed thinking about post-graduation plans than the upperclassmen (Guha et al., 2012). Counselors in this study concur that more attention is given to upperclassmen due to time constraints that necessitate prioritizing time with students.

“Counseling support has also been problematic for pathway students given that many counselors still have little knowledge of the Linked Learning approach. This unfamiliarity makes it difficult to engage counselors in creating master schedules that support full implementation of Linked Learning.” (Guha et al., 2012, p. 44) This assertion was confirmed as many counselors in this study were unable to define Linked Learning, or speak to what role it plays at their site.

“Ideally counselors should be assigned by pathway and should be part of the pathway community so that they know the students and are able to meet their academic, social, and personal needs.” (Guha et al., 2012, p. 44) At one site in this study, counselors are assigned by pathway program, at the other site, counselors have students on their caseloads from all pathways as they are assigned to students by grade level and alpha, but they serve as liaisons to one particular pathway. It is clear, that the Year Three Report and the pathway counselors in this study agree, “Counselors can and should also play an important role in the context of the Linked Learning experience. Specifically, counselors can help ensure that students’ class schedules prepare them for their future
career and college plans. They can also provide students with a wide range of academic, personal, and social support.” (Guha et al., 2012, p. 42)

Pathway Counselors are able to address the domains of academic, personal/social, and college/career by serving in various roles. These roles enable professional school counselors to meet the Linked Learning certification standards, and effectively meet the needs of pathway students and programs.

Role as Advocate

Counselors indicated that they serve as advocates to hold and collectively maintain a culture of expectations and support for all students by utilizing a school guidance curriculum, and advocacy skills. A mixed method study by the College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011 touted that counselors provide advocacy support because they have the ability to understand the whole student. Pathway counselors agreed with these findings as they relayed their experiences having a bird’s eye view of their students. As pathway counselors work with students in all three domains of academic, college and career, and personal/social; counselors have a snapshot of where the student is coming from, where the student is currently situated, and what steps are needed to get the students to their future.

Noted authors in the field, Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, (2007), assert that counselors must be active advocates of equity and access, especially for students in marginalized communities. Pathway counselors agreed as they took pride in sharing their stories of inviting under represented adult representatives to speak on campus regarding their challenges and successes, to assist in motivating students, and helping close the achievement gap.
One aspect of advocacy according to the ASCA is to identify underrepresented students, and assist them in their efforts to perform at their highest level academically (ASCA, 2005). Many pathway counselors shared their satisfaction with being responsible as a team for starting an “open system” for students to be able to take AP classes. This was in alignment with research that, “There is a particular need to find ways to support traditionally underrepresented students in their preparation for and pursuit of post-secondary degrees.” (McKillip, Rawls, & Barry, n.d., p. 51) They advocated for their students (largely under represented) to enroll in Advanced Placement classes by starting programs such as “AP week.”

“To gain the awareness and knowledge necessary to implement lessons likely to resonate with students’ values, beliefs, and experiences, school counselors are encouraged to be active in the school’s communities.” (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2011, p. 228) Professional school counselors shared their experiences with classroom guidance as a means of advocating for all of the students on their caseloads.

Professional school counselors agree with the scholarly literature that by serving in their role as advocate, they collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all students, and one of the ways they are able to make this lofty goal is “To gain the awareness and knowledge necessary to implement lessons likely to resonate with students’ values, beliefs, and experiences, school counselors are encouraged to be active in the school’s communities.” (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2011, p. 228)

Role as Collaborator

Counselors noted working with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support by collaborating, providing responsive
services, and utilizing teaming and collaboration skills (Amatea and Clark, 2005) reported that they expect their school counselor to be a collaborative case carrier. Clearly the participants in this study agree. They noted numerous personnel at school as well in the community that they collaborate and consult with as well as refer students and their families to for assistance.

“Given the number of students requiring mental health counseling, school counselors must identify resources and build alliances in their communities to increase their ability to help more students and increase access to mental health services.” (Kaffenberger & O’Rorke-Trigiani, n.d., p. 324) This study corroborated this assertion. Pathway counselors noted working with Site Based Mental Health Services as well as social workers, and outside mental health agencies collaboratively to intervene for students who are in need of additional support. Although prevalent in the findings, but not the research, was the counselors’ frequent mention of utilizing the school psychologist to assist in responsive services. Next to collaborating with teachers, then parents, the school psychologist was most frequently mentioned as a collaborative partner.

Pathway counselors’ responses affirmed Dr. Christopher Sinks’ posit in 2009 that counselors should want to work to create an environment where all stakeholders want to contribute. Pathway counselors were clear in their desire to team and collaborate especially to assist students who are at-risk.

(Janson et al., 2009) believes that counselors are in a unique position regarding the flow of information regarding students. They added that counselors also have the training to communicate as they collaborate and consult with other stakeholders.
Participants notably and wholeheartedly agreed that they are key stakeholders in terms of information regarding the student if it be academic, college/career, and/or personal/social issues, and that they have the ability to communicate effectively with other stakeholders to effectively assist students. They recounted many stories of who they need to communicate with in order to work together on a project or to solve a problem.

Professional school counselors agree with the scholarly literature that by serving in their role as collaborator, they work with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support.

Role as Systems Change Agent

Counselors know their pathway students in general and are familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway program by acting as system changes agents, providing systems support, and utilizing counseling and coordination skills (Zalaquett & D’Andrea, 2007). challenged counselors to step up in their role as social change agents, and realizing broader issues in society. Participants in this study have risen to the challenge of getting involved in the school. Pathway counselors spoke with pride about how they have acted at systems change agents to make changes to benefit the students they serve. A school needing to hire more math teachers due to an increased need for math sections thanks to the influx in enrollment of students in higher level math is just one of the examples that were shared of how pathway counselors affected positive change.

Many pathway counselors revealed suggestions that they made regarding the master schedule to effect positive change in their schools, giving a voice to students. This action concurs with the research that suggests, “Social justice advocacy practices
require a willingness to take risks for students without crossing ethical boundaries. It means thinking outside the box to challenge the status quo and respond to inequities. It means advocating for system policies that effectively serve the educational needs of targeted student groups and marginalized populations.” (Young, 2013, p. 3)

Acting as systems change agents, pathway counselors proudly spoke of utilizing technology including their newly updated department’s website and electronic newsletters that are gaining in popularity as viable communication tools. This highlights the assertion that, “Every communication opportunity is another chance for school counselors to advocate for their own work, and the overall value of school counseling.” (O’Grady, 2014, p. 13)

Professional school counselors agree with the scholarly literature that by serving in their role as systems change agent, they know their pathway students in general, and are familiar with the unique characteristics of their pathway program.

**Role as Leader**

Pathway Counselors reported guiding decisions about post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits by acting as a leader, utilizing Individual Student Planning, and leadership skills. The College Board and Advocacy and Policy Center in 2011, noted that nearly all counselors are in favor of additional support, time, and empowerment for leadership to be able to give students what they need for college. The participants in this study were no different. Pathway counselors emphasized caseload size as a major detriment in meeting student’s needs, as well as performing non-counseling related duties such as serving as assessment coordinators.
In the aforementioned study, 75% of counselors reported wanting to spend an increased amount of time building a college-going culture. Participants in this study asserted the same. Activities such as career days and college fairs are not counselor led due to time constraints. Repeatedly pathway counselors mentioned the desire to know their students better by spending quality time working with students on their individual student plans on an ongoing basis.

(Folkers, 2012) highlighted that career guidance and counseling are critical for student success. Pathway counselors in this study agree as they make it a priority to meet with students at least annually to discuss individual plans and goals.

Professional school counselors in this study revealed high expectations and standards for all students. Pathway counselors viewed themselves as critical leaders in guiding students regarding their postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits. As a national study suggests, “School counselors must be mindful of the covert and overt messages that they send to students about their college readiness and abilities.” (Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, & Day-Vines, 2009, p. 290)

Professional school counselors also agree with scholarly literature that by serving in their role as leader, they are able to guide decisions about postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits. However, they affirm that they would like more time to meet individually with students to be able to comprehensively meet their needs, instead of fulfilling non-counseling related duties.

**Conceptual Framework Applied to Findings**

It was apparent from this study that the SBCCCF was a fitting framework to describe the roles, duties, and skills performed by counselors in a Linked Learning
environment. In review, the SBCCCF melded the ASCA national standards in the areas of themes and roles, Community Counseling Theory (CCT), and the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI). At the heart of the Conceptual Framework is the doing, or action professional school counselors undertake in the performance of their duties and responsibilities. These are noted and have been articulated in this study as Direct and Indirect Student Services, and Direct and Indirect School Services. With the standards as context and foundation, this Conceptual Framework provided an appropriate lens to analyze data derived from participants. A brief discussion on counselor services to student and school will illuminate this assertion.

**Student Services**

Counselors indirectly provide student services by working with stakeholders in their pathway programs. They consult, collaborate, and team to empower all students, including those in disenfranchised groups. Counselors provide direct student services by leading individual counseling sessions that are provided for all students. These services are face-to-face direct interactions with students as opposed to indirect services that do not involve face-to-face student interaction.

**School Services**

Pathway Counselors indirectly provide school services by planning, developing, implementing, and coordinating comprehensive, and lasting systemic change in the schools and communities where students are situated. Pathway Counselors directly provide school services by advocating for preventative interventions including being proactive in order to support students who have not yet manifested personal or school related difficulties.
According to the participant’s perceptions in regard to research question number one, pathway counselors hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all pathway students by providing direct school services, and advocating for students. Direct School services provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences for students. This may include educational programs for students on issues such as career development, and interpersonal skills (Lewis et al., 2003).

Many pathway counselors noted providing school guidance curriculum lessons as a means of assisting students in achieving the competencies. A myriad of advocacy skills were noted to support all students. By advocating and providing direct school services, pathway counselors are able to proactively meet the needs of all pathway students. This in turn helps them hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all of their students.

According to the counselors’ responses that relate to research question number two, counselors work with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support by collaborating with stakeholders, and providing indirect student services. Indirect student services are aimed at making the school and community more responsive to the needs of at-risk students. This may include consultation with stakeholders at school, and in the community (Lewis et al., 2003).

All pathway counselors included their teaming and collaboration skills as they relate to responsive services that they provide. By collaborating and providing indirect student services, pathway counselors are able to provide responsive services to identify and intervene for pathway students who are in need of additional support.
According to the counselors’ answers in relation to research question number three, pathway counselors know their students in general, and are familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway program by being systems change agents, and providing indirect student services. Indirect school services are aimed at improving the environment of the school as a whole. These services may include actions on social policies affecting students, and efforts to improve the school’s learning environment (Lewis et al., 2003).

Pathway counselors explained the ways in which they utilize their counseling and coordination skills to support the system. By acting as systems change agents and providing indirect student services, pathway counselors, through counseling and coordination are able to provide systems support to get to know their pathway students in general, and be familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway program.

When asked, the counselors responded in relation to research question number four that they guide decisions about post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits by acting as leaders, and providing direct student services. Direct Student services are aimed at providing individual counseling sessions or what is referred to as face to face time. These services may include individual and group counseling (Lewis et al., 2003).

Counselors exhorted upon the ways in which they utilize their leadership skills to assist students in individual student planning. By acting as leaders, and providing direct student services, professional school counselors are able to utilize their leadership skills to enable students to create individual student plans to guide their decisions about post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits.
Implications

This study sought to investigate a problem, that of the absence of counselors’ voices and perceptions from the conversation on their role in a Linked Learning environment. It was apparent from the lack of studies regarding Linked Learning and the counselors’ roles within that environment, that counselors had not had a chance to fully contribute their perceptions.

Participants shared their standpoints regarding several ambiguous areas. One area was that of the ASCA’s National Standards. The participant’s knowledge base varied widely largely dependent on what University the counselor had received their graduate studies and Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credentialing training from. Those that reported that they were alumni of California State University, Long Beach had significantly more experience with the ASCA National Standards than counselors from other graduate programs. This heavy emphasis placed on the ASCA standards spilled over into the counselors’ professional lives in terms of their practice. Counselors should be well versed in the ASCA standards. This will be important as counselor’s support the common core implementation.

The new Common Core State Standards support, “working in alignment with ASCA national standards for professional school counseling.” (Achieve, College Summit, NASSP, NAESP, 2013, p. 9) A lack of knowledge of the ASCA National Standards, will affect practice on multiple levels.

Not only was the knowledge base an area of contrast in this study, but specifically, the roles themselves are nebulous. This was a huge area of disparity as reported by pathway counselors in this study. The most prominent areas of misalignment
were in the areas of systems change agent, ranging from not effecting any change to being an effective agent of change. However, the area that garnered the most controversy was that of the role of leader. Pathway counselors reported variances from no leadership role (and not wanting any), to serving primarily as an educational leader with many responsibilities. All counselors reported wearing numerous hats, and serving in various functions. Pathway counselors reported that their professional identities include mental health provider, college and career guidance specialist, advocate; systems change agent, leader, consultant, collaborator, etcetera. This finding aligns with the posit that, “A conjoint professional school counselor identity that includes the roles of both educational leader and mental health professional positions school counselors to better respond to all students including those with mental health needs.” (DeKruyf, Auger, & Trice-Black, n.d., p. 273)

The implication is that this notable lack of knowledge of the ASCA National Standards, and the roles that counselors are to fulfill in their Linked Learning environment is playing out negatively in policy and practice as evidenced by the assertion, “When school counselors do not have a clear definition of their job position, other roles and duties can easily get in the way of college counseling, and do.” (McKillip et al., n.d., p. 52)

The Expanding Pathways: Transforming High School Education in California reported in 2008 in recommendation 4.2 that, “The state should undertake a major examination of the role of counseling in high schools, with special attention to the kinds of counseling services needed to help students map successful pathways to both postsecondary education and careers.” (ConnectEd, 2008, p. 25) As professionals in
search of an identity, professional school counselors need a voice to help them clearly articulate their roles to better meet program aspirations of Linked Learning. Counselors can provide and assume significant leadership roles as a systems change agent that can support and improve transitions for Linked Learning High Schools moving forward. Linked Learning will be well served to utilize counselors in this endeavor.

**Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

In researching high school counselors’ perceptions of their role in a Linked Learning environment, it has become apparent that counselors should be recognized as important to the culture and sustainability of campus successes and practices especially in terms of Linked Learning. In policy, it would be valuable to increase professional development opportunities for counselors especially in the area of Linked Learning. This training should be ongoing and led by professional school counselors who have extensive knowledge in the field of counseling as well as Linked Learning and all that it entails. This training would be most beneficial if pathway counselors were provided a manual specifically designed to their roles and duties in a Linked Learning environment. District-wide training, time to meet together at the school site, including scheduled time with their specific administrators for their pathway program is a crucial piece in this puzzle. Lead teachers, and select members of the school district have received professional development in Linked Learning, but this has not been extended to counselors as exemplified by the responses of pathway counselors when prompted to share what Linked Learning is and if they have had training in it. Professional development in Linked Learning is critical if full implementation of Linked Learning is to be actualized.
The researcher also recommends, based on the experience of the participants, that universities develop appropriate training for Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credential candidates in the area of Linked Learning. This certification process could mirror the current Single Subject credential certification for Linked Learning at California State University, Long Beach.

Additionally, the researcher also suggests that professional development for administrators in the effective use of pathway counselors in a Linked Learning environment be a priority. This training should be held with the counselors present to allow time for teaming and collaboration.

Lastly, the researcher recommends that counselors be held accountable by being evaluated based upon the agreed upon standards.

By providing professional development for school counselors and administrators, more effectively training graduate students, as well as holding counselors accountable, the researcher believes that Linked Learning will be more likely to meet its full implementation, and be sustainable over a period of time. In terms of practice, the researcher believes that caseload size is adversely affecting the counselors’ ability to implement the needed measures to fully implement the Linked Learning certification standards. Caseloads that are more than double of the ASCA’s recommendation for effective practice, have adversely affected the professional school counselors’ ability to implement and sustain the support needed for students and staff.

Additionally in terms of practice, the researcher believes that if there was a decrease, and preferably, an elimination of non-counseling related duties placed upon counselors, they would be able to more effectively meet the needs of students, staff, and
families, especially in terms of the Linked Learning certification guide expectations. The ASCA notes inappropriate activities for school counselors (ASCA, 2012, p. 45). The major area of concern for counselors was the time utilized for the coordinating cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs. Counselors also reported teaching classes when teachers are absent, however it was not full day coverage, usually until a substitute could be obtained. Lastly, ASCA lists supervising classrooms or common areas as an inappropriate activity for school counselors. Counselors reported serving in this role on an as-needed basis, as well as acting as a quasi-administrator.

By eliminating inappropriate duties such as coordinating assessments, counselors would have more time to spend working with the students they are trained to serve, allowing for increased implementation of Linked Learning goals and objectives. By doing so, counselors need to be held accountable for their impact on student development in the areas of academic, personal/social, and college/career domains. It is critical that school districts develop job descriptions for counselors, based on the Professional Standards, and design performance expectations grounded in the professional standards. This will require further training in an articulated setting that includes high school principals charged with the evaluation process.

**Directions for Further Research**

From the findings in this study, the researcher can recommend several areas for further research.

The first direction for further research is an investigation into the differences between the roles of counselor in Linked Learning certified, versus non-certified pathways. This would include the role the counselor played in the certification process.
Studying Linked Learning certified versus non-certified pathway roles of counselors would be an intriguing avenue for further research.

The second direction for further research is more investigation into the university level training received toward working in a Linked Learning environment. The researcher’s interest was piqued by the fact that one university where counselors attended (California State University, Long Beach), had trained counseling graduate students with an emphasis on the ASCA National Standards, and the counselors that later worked together at the local high school utilized this training to organize their program. No counselor had received university training on Linked Learning as they had all graduated prior to the expansion of Linked Learning.

The third direction for further research is a replication of this study in different surroundings. It would be interesting to replicate this study in other school district in various regions of CA, and eventually the United States as Linked Learning spreads nationally.

The fourth direction for further research is a study similar to the researcher’s study, but on a larger scale, with more attention paid to demographics such as how counselors’ roles in a Linked Learning environment are affected in economically diversified settings. The researcher believes that this would be a fascinating undertaking to research this subject as large; urban versus small, rural school districts could be included as well. A study could be conducted with a larger group of participants at more varied sites, and the demographics of the sites and participants could be taken into account during analysis. Similarly, demographics of the school could be analyzed more in detail, perhaps with respect to various subgroups present on each campus.
A fifth direction for further research is a perceptual matching study. It would be interesting to conduct a study that explores both principals’ perceptions and counselors’ perceptions of the counselors’ role at the same time. One could analyze whether those perceptions agree with each other, and to what extent.

Last of all, a sixth direction, a study could be done on the changing role of the counselor as Linked Learning implementation increases at a school site, for example in San Diego and Houston where Linked Learning is just starting to roll out district-wide.

Conclusion

The role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment has been brought to the forefront in one of the very few studies of its kind. This study has begun the task of inviting counselors’ voices to contribute to the conversation of their role in a Linked Learning environment. The findings of the study reveal that counselors have meaningful insights to share about their roles and duties, and how they assist students, staff, and other stakeholders. This study reveals that high school counselors in a Linked Learning environment act as advocates to maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all students. High school counselors act as collaborators to work with their pathway community to identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support. Pathway counselors wear the hat of systems change agent to get to know pathway students and the unique characteristics of their pathway program. Lastly, pathway counselors serve as leaders to guide decisions about postsecondary education, training, and career pursuits.

According to the testimony of twelve pathway counselors, they utilize the ASCA’s delivery systems of school guidance curriculum, responsive services, systems
support, and individual student planning to meet the needs of students, staff, and other stakeholders. Moreover, pathway counselors use their advocacy, teaming, collaborating, counseling, coordinating, and leadership skills to meet the needs of students, staff, and the other stakeholders they serve.

By providing Direct and Indirect School and Student services, pathway counselors should be regarded as an important aspect of a Linked Learning environment, and they should be recognized and encouraged.

This study concentrated on High School Counselors’ roles in a Linked Learning environment. There is no doubt, that pathway counselors can be regarded as excellent resources. Although, one cannot ignore the difficulty of the past years in terms of budgetary constraints and the elimination of numerous counseling positions, professional school counselors are vital to ensuring that the vision of full implementation of Linked Learning becomes a reality.
APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPLICATION
Application to Conduct Research in the Long Beach Unified School District

Applications to conduct research that involve students, parents or staff of Long Beach Unified School District will be reviewed by the Long Beach Unified School District Institutional Review Board or a designated IRB representative. Research guidelines incorporated in this application are designed to protect the confidentiality of human subjects and guarantee the integrity and quality of any research conducted in the district. In addition, proposed research cannot be conducted during state testing (April – July), must not violate state education codes related to privacy and family values, may not create a data burden on teachers or schools, and is entirely voluntary on the part of the participants.

This application will ensure that your proposal is properly aligned with current District policy regarding human subjects and the District’s research priorities. If the Principal Investigator is a student, we require a supporting letter from the research advisor.

Please complete the following form and attach clearly labeled additional pages as needed. Please allow a minimum of thirty working days for a response from the District. All approved field-based research must be conducted under the supervision of the school Principal or other administrator.

Part I: Study Information

1. STUDY TITLE
   The Role of Counselor in a Linked Learning Environment

2. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR’S NAME: Roberta "Bobbi" Clarke
   ADDRESS: __________________________
   TELEPHONE NUMBER: __________________________
   FAX NUMBER: __________________________
   E-MAIL ADDRESS: bclarke@lbschools.net

3. NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION, INSTITUTION, OR AGENCY REPRESENTED BY INVESTIGATOR AND/OR TEAM:
   Department of Educational Leadership, California State University, Long Beach

4. THE MISSION OF THE ORGANIZATION, INSTITUTION, OR AGENCY:
   The College of Education at California State University, Long Beach is a learning and teaching community that prepares professional educators and practitioners who promote
equity and excellence in diverse urban settings through effective pedagogy, evidence-based practices, collaboration, leadership, innovation, scholarship, and advocacy.

5. FUNDER(S) OF THE STUDY:
James Irvine Foundation

6. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OR HUMAN SUBJECT REVIEW BOARDS INVOLVED (ATTACH COPIES OF CURRENT APPROVALS)
Internal Review Board of California State University, Long Beach (approval pending)

7. NAMES AND TITLES OF ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE RESEARCH TEAM WHO WILL HAVE DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE SUBJECTS:
Bobbi Clarke, Ed.D. Doctoral Student, James Irvine Foundation Fellow

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INVESTIGATOR TO INFORM ALL TEAM MEMBERS OF THE RESEARCH PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

8. STUDY TIMELINE (beginning, data collection points, anticipated conclusion):

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<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible person</td>
<td>Fall 2013       Interviews with Millikan and Cabrillo Counselors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Fall 2013 Data analysis and write report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Spring 2013 Submit report</td>
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9. WHERE THE STUDY WILL TAKE PLACE:
The interviews will take place during or after school. The interviews for this study will be conducted at the location of choice of the adult interviewee(s). The options will include the interviewee's office, a conference room, or acquired off-campus location. In all interviews, the goal will be to ensure that the participant is comfortable and that the interview is discrete.

10. PLEASE PROVIDE A BRIEF AND CONCISE EXPLANATION OF WHAT TASKS OR ACTIVITIES THE SUBJECTS IN THIS RESEARCH WOULD BE ASKED TO COMPLETE:
Each participant will be asked to participate in a semi-structured in-depth interview that will be approximately one hour in length. Following the transcription of that interview, each participant will be asked to triangulate the transcript by verifying the context, after which each will receive a $5.00 Starbucks gift card and hand written thank you note.

11. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY TO THE LONG BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
The significance of this study to Long Beach Unified School District is that focus on the role(s) of counselors in a Linked Learning environment. It will invite more critical reflection by counselors as they discuss and examine their perceptions. In addition, this research will assist counselors in bridging the gap in their knowledge, skills, and attitudes relative to building leadership capacity within Linked Learning. This will also assist
counselor preparation programs such as the one at CSULB in better preparing their students to work as counselors in a Linked Learning environment in LBUSD. The researcher hopes to create a counselor certification process likened to the single subject teaching credential one already in place in joint effort with LBUSD. The researcher hopes to be able to provide professional development to the current counselors and administrators in the LBUSD regarding how to best utilize counselors in a Linked Learning Environment.

12. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY TO THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

This topic is significant due to the expanding role of counselor in building Linked Learning capacity on an educational campus. The role of counselor strengthens student experience which is a perfect fit for Linked Learning. Counselors are gatekeepers for equity and access.

13. THIS STUDY INVOLVES THE COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION OR APPROVAL OF ANY AGENCY, SCHOOL, INSTITUTION, OR ORGANIZATION? (Check YES or NO below)

YES ☒ NO ☐

a. IF YES, PLEASE LIST THEM AND STATE THE EXTENT OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT

California State University, Long Beach

b. HAS COOPERATION, PARTICIPATION, OR APPROVAL ALREADY BEEN SOUGHT OR OBTAINED FROM THIS ENTITY? (Check YES or NO below)

YES ☒ NO ☐

14. THIS RESEARCH: (Check YES or NO below)

YES ☒ NO ☐ Involves normal educational practices, such as research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or research on the effectiveness of, or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods, educational leadership or governance and takes place in an educational setting.

YES ☐ NO ☒ Involves the use of educational tests?

If yes, what type of test? __________________________________________

YES ☒ NO ☐ Involves survey or interview procedures?
If yes, which procedures

| YES ☑ | NO ☐ Face to Face |
|YES ☐ | NO ☐ Telephone |
|YES ☐ | NO ☐ Mailing |
|YES ☑ | NO ☐ Other email follow up | (please specify) |

Involves the collection /study of data?

| YES ☑ | NO ☐ Existing Data |
|YES ☑ | NO ☐ Documents |
|YES ☑ | NO ☑ Medical, legal, academic, or other records |
|YES ☐ | NO ☐ Other | (please specify) |

15. IF RESEARCHER REQUESTING DATA IS A GRADUATE STUDENT:

a. PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

1. GRADUATE ADVISOR INFORMATION:

   NAME:  Dr. James Scott   TEL NUMBER:  
   TITLE: Distinguished Faculty in Residence CSULB, Dir. Linked Learning Fellowship
   FAX NUMBER:  
   DEPT: Ed.D. in Educational Leadership   EMAIL James.Scott@csulb.edu

b. PLEASE ATTACH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

   1. A COPY OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL
   2. A LETTER FROM GRADUATE ADVISOR DENOTING APPROVAL OF THE THESIS OR DISSERTATION

Part II: SUBJECT INFORMATION

1. DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS TO BE INVOLVED:
Invite all Counselors at Millikan and Cabrillo High Schools to participate
2. EXPECTED NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS TO BE INVOLVED:
20 participants max.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND HAZARDS TO THE SUBJECT (DESCRIBE IN DETAIL):
There are several potential risks associated with this research:
2. The counselor feeling uncomfortable responding to certain questions in the interview protocol.
3. The adult feeling uncomfortable with interview location.

The researcher will take multiple steps to minimize the risk that participants face as a consequence of participation in this research:
1. The researcher will provide and use pseudonyms to increase confidentiality. All raw data and consent to participate forms will be kept in a locked file cabinet and the researcher will have the only access to that locked file cabinet. The participant will be asked to use pseudonyms when referring to other individuals during the interview process.
2. The participant may stop the interview at any time, may skip a question, or may simply decide not to answer any question.
3. The participant will have the option to determine the location and time for the interview: the researcher will provide local options such as local eateries, teachers classroom, conference room, library, staff members office, or career center.

4. EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT:
The participants may benefit from involvement in this research as follows:
1. All participants will receive a thank you note and a $5.00 Starbucks gift card following the triangulation for transcript verification.
2. Participants will most likely benefit from the opportunity to explore and reflect on their experiences in Linked Learning as an educational leader. This process can provide an opportunity for them to reflect upon their practices, successes, and improvement plans.

5. PROPOSED REMUNERATION OR OTHER REWARDS TO THE SUBJECT:
1. All participants will receive a thank you note and a $5.00 Starbucks gift card following the triangulation for transcript verification.

6. HOW WILL THE SUBJECTS BE SELECTED AND RECRUITED?
All participants will be counselors at Millikan or Cabrillo High Schools. All participants will be contacted through e-mail. Following their acknowledgment, a letter of consent will be sent to each individual participant via GroupWise, the Long Beach Unified School District's technological communication system.

A letter of support (Appendix A) from Dr. James Scott is included in the appendix. I will contact and recruit study participants as follows:
1. Millikan and Cabrillo counselors will be recruited to participate via groupwise email.
2. The researcher will confirm participation with each individual and schedule one-hour interviews. This step will most likely take place via e-mail or perhaps by phone with the participant and I agreeing on a date and time for the audio-taped interview.

Approximately twenty adults who are counselors at Cabrillo and Millikan high schools will be involved in this study.
3. Using LBUSD GroupWise e-mail system, the researcher will send a general e-mail to each potential candidate for participation. The text of the e-mail will explain: who the researcher is, the purpose of the study, and the candidate's role in the study. the e-mail will ask potential candidates to express their interest to participate in the study (Appendix B).

4. Following the initial contact and potential candidates' reply indicating interest, the researcher will via e-mail or telephone confirm the candidate's participation and schedule a one-hour interview. After the interview is scheduled, the researcher will forward an electronic copy of the informed consent form (Appendix C) for review prior to the interview appointment.

3. At the time of the interview, but prior to asking questions, the researcher will review the consent form with the individual participant, solicit questions, check for understanding, and obtain his or her written consent to participate in the research interview and consent the audio taped during the interview.

7. **HOW WILL YOU ASSURE THAT THE PARTICIPATION OF THE SUBJECT IS VOLUNTARY?**
The participants will have the option of ending the interview at any time, not answering any question or questions, and or being completely removed from the research process.

8. **WHAT PROVISIONS WILL BE MADE FOR SUBJECTS NOT WILLING TO PARTICIPATE?**
The participant will be informed before the start of the interview of their right to not answer any question or questions, end the interview at any time and or not participating in the research process.

9. **DESCRIBE THE INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE FOLLOWED. ATTACH COPIES OF SCRIPTS, PARENT LETTERS, FORMS, ETC.**
Appendix A Letter of support from supervising faculty member
Appendix B Email to Staff for Participation in Research
Appendix C Consent Form
Appendix D Interview Protocol

10. **CAN THE HUMAN SUBJECT BE DIRECTLY IDENTIFIED BY?** (Check YES or NO below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Name on Response Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Photo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Television/VCR tape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Audiotape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(please specify)

11. **CAN THE HUMAN SUBJECT BE IDENTIFIED THROUGH ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?**
(Check YES or NO below)

| YES | NO | Detailed Biographical Information |
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12. The researcher shall make every possible attempt to maintain confidentiality of the research. IF for some reason, the responses, information, or observations of subject become known to persons other than the researchers, could this information reasonably place the subject at risk of? (Check YES or NO)

YES  NO  Coded Research Forms
YES  NO  Other
(please specify)

YES  NO  Damage to his/her financial standing?
YES  NO  Damage to his/her present or future employability?
YES  NO  Criminal or civil liability?
YES  NO  Embarrassment or mental anguish?

13. COULD THE RESEARCH DEAL WITH SENSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE SUBJECTS OWN BEHAVIOR, SUCH AS?

YES  NO  Alcohol/Drug Use
YES  NO  Sexual Behavior
YES  NO  Physical manipulation of the participant
YES  NO  Other

Please include the following information with this application, in addition to any additional comments or documents requested in other sections of this application.

1. Curriculum vitae of the Principal Investigator and project staff
2. Copy of the grant proposal if the research is grant funded
3. Copies of any test instruments to be used in the research
4. Copy of any survey instruments and focus group or interview protocols
5. Any other material you intend to deliver to the respondent in conjunction with the research, including the cover letter and any verbal scripts that will be used in interviews, focus groups, etc…
6. Details of any specific data that will be requested from district.

I certify that this completed research application is an accurate and complete statement of the nature of my research. I further agree that this research does not involve coercion, deception, or psychological manipulation of any School District participant.

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Signature of Principal Investigator________________________________________

Date______________________________
APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER
August 28, 2013

Dear Ms. Bobbi Clarke,

Your request to conduct research in the Long Beach Unified School District has been approved. Specifically, your study, “The Role of Counselor in a Linked Learning Environment” has been approved with the following conditions:

a) Your study has been approved for Cabrillo and Millikan. Obtain written documentation of cooperation, participation or approval from the principal.

b) All potential participants must be notified that their participation in your research is voluntary. Signed consent from participants must be secured prior to beginning your work. All requests not to participate will be clearly adhered to throughout the data collection phase of this study.

c) Prior to beginning your research, you must submit an official IRB approval from California State University Long Beach. You may submit a copy via email to researchmail@lbschools.net or mail a hard copy directly to the Office of Research, Testing & Evaluation, Attn: Applications to Conduct Research.

d) Copies of all signed consent forms must be submitted to and will remain on file with: Kathleen Fiscopo, LBUSD, Research Office Administrator, 1515 Hughes Way, Long Beach CA 90810.

e) To protect employees from receiving unwanted solicitations for participation in studies or surveys, district e-mail may not be used to recruit teachers. Initial recruitment should be through dissemination of flyers at the site or through meetings with site approval. After recruitment, district email may be used with participant permission.

f) All research should be conducted during non-duty time. If you find it necessary to conduct research during your established work hours in order to fulfill your study requirements, you should speak to your supervisor to request use of vacation or personal necessity time to complete any research activities.

You may use this letter to show your study has been approved.

In accordance with the Federal and State Laws, LBUSD Board Policy and Administrative Regulations, you agree to respect the privacy rights of participants, including their right to refrain from participation in your research project. In addition, parents/guardians must receive prior notification of any surveys, evaluations, or testing that collect personal student information and that consent is obtained in accordance with law.

LBUSD Administrative Regulation 6162.8 requires an annual renewal of multi-year studies, and the application process needs to be followed each year. There is no assurance of a renewal each year.

Thank you for your strict adherence to the guidelines above and best wishes in your research endeavors.

Sincerely,

Dr. Christopher Lund
Director
Office of Research, Planning and Evaluation
Long Beach Unified School District
APPENDIX C

EMAIL TO COUNSELORS
Email to Counselors at Cabrillo and Millikan High Schools

The Role of Counselor in a Linked Learning Environment

Hello, I am Bobbi Clarke, and I am contacting you as a doctoral student at CSULB. The purpose of this e-mail is to inform you about a research project called “The Role of Counselor in a Linked Learning Environment.” I’m working with Dr. James Scott, Distinguished Faculty in Residence at CSULB as a part of the grant from the James Irvine Foundation to Long Beach Unified School District and CSULB.

Please read the information and determine if you would consider interviewing as a participant in this study. I will like to interview all counselors all Millikan and Cabrillo High Schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the role of counselors in a Linked Learning environment.

Procedures

You will be asked to share your experiences in an individual interview. The interview will last about an hour. The interview will be audiotaped; if you do not want to be audiotaped, you cannot participate in the research.

The interview will take place at Millikan High School, Cabrillo High School or at a local establishment of your choice.

Risk and Benefits

There is no anticipated risk to you for participation in this study. You will receive a $5 Starbucks gift card and written thank you note upon completion of the study.

Confidentiality

Any information that is attained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will be coded using a pseudonym.

Participation and Withdrawal

You may choose to participate or refuse to participate. If you volunteer to participate, you may still withdraw at any time without any consequence.

Contact Information

Please feel free to contact me directly for any information, comments, or concerns at bclarke@lbschools.net or telephone (562) 951-7716. You may also contact the research fellowship advisor, Dr. James Scott, email: James.Scott@csulb.edu, (562) 985-4111.

Thank you for your consideration,
Bobbi Clarke
APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD REQUIREMENTS
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH
OFFICE OF RESEARCH & SPONSORED PROGRAMS

DATE: November 20, 2013

TO: Roberta Clarke
FROM: California State University, Long Beach (IRB)

PROJECT TITLE: [508160-3] The Role of Counselor in a Linked Learning Environment
REFERENCE #: 14-041s
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: November 20, 2013
EXPIRATION DATE: November 19, 2014
REVIEW TYPE: Administrative

This is to advise you that the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) of California State University, Long Beach, has reviewed your protocol application.

Your application is approved. The requested modifications have been received, reviewed, and accepted.

Approval is for a period of one year from the date of this letter and conditional upon your willingness to carry out your continuing responsibilities under University policy. If you would like to continue this research after this one year period, please submit a renewal application and an annual report to the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs two months prior to your expiration date of November 19, 2014.

1. You must clearly indicate in the header or footer of each page of your approved Informed Consent Form the approval and expiration dates of the protocol as follows: "Approved from November 20, 2013 to November 19, 2014 by the CSULB IRB".

2. You are required to inform the Director or Senior Associate Director, Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, in writing (email is acceptable) or through IRBNet within twenty-four hours of any adverse event in the conduct of research involving human subjects. The report shall include the nature of the adverse event, the names of the persons affected, the extent of the injury or breach of security, if any, and any other information material to the situation.

3. You may not change any aspect of your research procedure involving human subjects without written permission from the Director, Office of Research & Sponsored Programs or the Chair of the IRB. Please use the Protocol Modification Form on IRBNet to request any changes.

4. Maintain your research records as detailed in the protocol.
Should you have any questions about the conduct of your research under this protocol, particularly about providing informed consent and unexpected contingencies, please do not hesitate to call the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs at (562) 985-8147. We wish you the best of success in your research.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within California State University, Long Beach Institutional Review Board’s records.
APPENDIX E

ADULT CONSENT FORM
Adult Consent Form

The Role of Counselor in a Linked Learning Environment

You are being asked to participate in a research study called “The Role of Counselor in a Linked Learning Environment” with Bobbi Clarke, doctoral student at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. James Scott, Distinguished Faculty in Residence at CSULB as a part of the grant from the James Irvine Foundation to Long Beach Unified School District and CSULB. You were presented an informational invitation via email, received a consent form, and must sign and agree to be audio recorded to participate in this research study. The conditions for participation includes that you must be a Counselor at Millikan or Cabrillo High Schools. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate, you may still stop the interview at any time without any consequence.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment.

Procedures

Upon your confirmation of participation, you will be asked to share your experiences in an individual interview. You will have your choice of interview location at your school for the interview. We may meet in your office, at my school office, a conference room, or at a quiet, off campus location. In all cases, the goal is to ensure that you are comfortable and the interview is discrete.

The interview will last about an hour. I will ask you interview questions pertaining to your role as a counselor in a Linked Learning environment.

The interview will be audiotaped; if you do not want to be audiotaped, you cannot participate in the research. I will be taking handwritten notes during the interview as well. The interviews will be transcribed by the researcher, and you will have the opportunity to correct the transcript. You will not be allowed to review, edit or erase the digital recording. However, I will consult with you if you have questions about the accuracy of each transcript and/or if I plan to use information that might put you at risk.

You will be automatically provided with a copy of the transcript for your review. After affirmation of the transcript, the audiotape will be erased, and the transcription data will only be identified by a pseudonym.

Risk and Benefits

There are several potential risk associated with this research.

1. If your comments are linked to you, and there is a breach of confidentiality, this may have adverse implications for your reputation and/or relationships with colleagues.
Moreover, if you are critical of your experience, describe perceived lack of support, or discuss obstacles, this could create difficulties with colleagues, head counselors, or principals. The result could not only be strained relationships but also psychological discomfort on your part. In the most extreme cases, it is at least possible that angry colleagues might cause professional troubles for the participant. To mitigate this risk, pseudonyms will be assigned to minimize breach of confidentiality. The researcher will also store all data (including consent forms) off campus, in a private residence. All research documents over which I have direct control (save the single document linking actual name to pseudonym and the consent forms) will reflect participants’ pseudonyms.

2. Feeling uncomfortable responding to certain questions in the interview protocol. If you are feeling uncomfortable you may decline to answer any questions and/or end the interview at any time.

3. Feeling coerced to participate because it may affect employment status. If you volunteer to participate, you may still withdraw at any time without any consequence. Participation or non-participation will not affect employment status or any other personal consideration or right you usually expect. Teachers, faculty, staff, or administration at Millikan or Cabrillo High Schools will not have access to this data associated with this research study.

Upon completion of the interview the researcher will transcribe all notes and audio recording so that you may correct and verify. After verification, you will receive a five dollars Starbucks card and thank you note. You will receive the gift card even if you skip questions, but not if you withdraw from the study.

If additional services that are beyond the researcher’s training are required after the interview process I recommend you contact the Risk Management office at LBUSD (562) 997-8234.

Confidentiality
Any information that is attained in connection with this study, and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The information collected about you will be coded using a pseudonym.

Only the researcher will have access to the data associated with this study. The data will be stored in the researchers locked file cabinet and on a password-protected computer. Consent forms and data will be destroyed three years after the completion of the research.

Participation and Withdrawal
You may choose to participate or refuse to participate. If you volunteer to participate, you may still withdraw at any time without any consequence. Participation or non-participation will not affect your employment status or any other personal consideration or right you usually expect. Teachers, faculty, staff, or administrators at Millikan or Cabrillo High Schools will not have access to this data associated with this research study.
Rights of the Research Subjects

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your participation without any penalty or repercussion. You are not waiving any legal claims or rights because of your participation in this research. If you have any questions about your rights as a study subject or if you would like to speak with someone independent of this research team to obtain answers to questions about this research please contact California State University Long Beach, Office of University Research at (562) 985-5314.

Contact Information

Please feel free to contact the researcher directly for any information, comments, or concerns.

Bobbi Clarke, email: bclarke@lbschools.net or telephone (562)951-7716. You may also contact the research fellowship advisor, Dr. James Scott, email: James.Scott@csulb.edu, (562) 985-8650.

Signature of Research Subject

I have read the above information and agree to participate in the research project mentioned above. I have also been given a copy of this form for my personal records.

Printed Name: ________________________________________________________________

Signature: ___________________________________________ Date: _________________
APPENDIX F

ADDENDUM TO INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Addendum to informed Consent form - audiotaping and transcribing interviews
Investigator: Roberta “Bobbi” Clarke

research study title: “The Role of Counselor in a Linked Learning Environment”
You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: “The Role of Counselor in a Linked Learning Environment” conducted by Roberta “Bobbi” Clarke. Notes will be taken and an audiotape will be made for the interview part of this research study. I am asking for your permission to allow me to audiotape (sound) the interview part of this research study to ensure that the conversation is documented completely and accurately.

Agreement ~ I understand that:
As with the survey portion of this study, my participation in the audio taped interview portion of the study is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I can withdraw by telling the researcher that I no longer wish to participate and I will be withdrawn from the study. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one at my site will be told.

The audio recordings will be transcribed by the researcher. The researcher will keep the audio tapes, hand written interview notes, and transcribed notes secured in a locked file cabinet. The researcher will be the only person to have access to the data, audiotapes and notes.

The audio recordings will be erased once the transcripts are checked for accuracy. As with the survey you completed, after the research is completed, the written and transcribed notes will be destroyed after a period of a year.

Transcripts of my interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as my voice) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from this study.

The purpose and nature of this research study have been explained to me by the researcher and I agree to participate in the audio taped interview. My signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record me as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission. After signing this consent form, I will also receive a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Signature: __________________________________________ Date:

Name (print): __________________________________________

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APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Interview Protocol

Section 1: Introduction to the Participant

I want to start off by expressing my sincerest appreciation for your involvement in my study. I know that Counselors are very busy, and I don’t want to waste your time. My interview protocol is divided into several sections. The interview is structured to allow me to make connections between your story and my research and check for consistency of data. With that said, let’s get started.

Ice Breakers
1. How long have you been a counselor?
2. How long have you been at this site? Other sites?
3. What University did you get your Masters from?
4. What prompted you to become a counselor? Tell me about your journey here.

Section 2: How do counselors hold and collectively maintain a culture of high expectations and support for all students? (Advocacy, Direct School Services, School Guidance Curriculum) (Keep in mind, don’t state)

1. Tell me about you expectations for your students.
2. How does your SLC maintain a culture of high expectations for your students?
3. What types of things do you do personally to support your students?
4. How does your SLC support your students?
5. In what ways do you act as an advocate?
6. Tell me about your experience with classroom guidance for your SLC.
7. What services do you provide that are preventative or proactive in nature for your students?

Section 3: How do high school counselors work with the pathway community to identify and intervene for students who are in need of additional support? (Collaborator/consultant/refer, responsive services, Indirect Student services) (Keep in mind, don’t state)

1. How do you work with your SLC to identify students who are in need of additional support?
2. How do you work with your SLC to intervene for students who are in need of additional support?
3. What specific support services are available to students?
4. How do you collaborate, consult, and team with others?-refer
5. What responsive services do you provide?
6. What work do you do with other stakeholders? -indirect student services

Section 4: To what extent do counselors know pathway/SLC students, and are they familiar with the unique characteristics of the pathway/SLC program? (Systems change agent, indirect school services, systems support, counseling, and coordination) (Keep in mind, don’t state)
1. How well do you feel you know your SLC students?
2. What are the unique characteristics of your SLC?
3. In what ways do you counsel your students on personal, social, and emotional issues?
4. In what ways do you counsel your students on academic issues?
5. In what ways do you act as a systems change agent?
6. What activities do you do that support the counseling department as a whole?

Section 5: How do counselors guide decisions about post-secondary education, training, and career pursuits? (Leader, Individual Student Planning, Direct Student services) (Don’t state, keep in mind)

1. How do you guide student’s decisions about post-secondary education?
2. How do you guide student’s decisions about career pursuits?
3. What activities are you engaged in that support your role as leader?
4. How often do you meet as an SLC?
5. What role/s do you have in the SLC?
6. To what extent do you lead individual, group, and family counseling?
7. What does individual student planning look like in your SLC?

Section 6: Concluding Questions

1. Did you have input as to what SLC you were assigned to? Please explain.
2. Do you view yourself as an integral SLC member? Please explain.
3. Do you believe that your views and suggestions are valued by your SLC team? Please explain.
4. Have you received any professional development or attended any conferences in the area of Linked Learning? If so, which ones?
5. How would you explain Linked Learning to others?
6. How aware are you of the American School Counselor Association’s National Standards?
7. How confident do you feel in your role as advocate for your SLC?
8. How confident do you feel in your role as leader for your SLC?
9. How confident do you feel in your role as collaborator for your SLC?
10. How confident do you feel in your role as systems change agent for your SLC?

That brings us to the end of the interview questions. You’ve shared a lot of information with me about your background and your involvement with Linked Learning, and this has been very helpful to my research into the role of counselor in a Linked Learning environment.

Thank you very much for your time and assistance. Again thank you so much for your participation!
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


